Explore USA Magazine

Fall 2025

Special

Holiday Edition

Midwest Madness

Foliage in Fall

Autumns Front Porch: Small Towns that Glow

Holiday Hot Spots

00123 456 78

Welcome to Explore USA Magazine's Fall 2025 Special Holiday Edition

As autumn sweeps across the country and the holiday season sparkles on the horizon, *Explore USA Magazine* invites you to experience America at its most colorful and heartwarming. From golden foliage drives and cozy small-town getaways to festive lights, winter markets, and seasonal flavors, this issue celebrates the magic of travel during fall and the holidays. Whether you're planning one last autumn adventure or dreaming of snowy celebrations ahead, let this edition inspire your next unforgettable journey. 🍁🎄✨

Masthead

(Staff List)

COMPANY
Explore USA Magazine

CEO
Robert Lynn

Editor-in-Chief
Samantha Bellamy

Sales Director
Ashley Smith

Account Managers
Jordan Fields, Casey Monroe, Taylor Brooks, Devin Carter

Contributing Writers
Riley Green, Morgan Lake, Avery Rivers

Welcome Letter

Welcome to Explore USA Magazine!

Dear Reader,

We're delighted to welcome you to the Fall 2025 Issue of Explore USA Magazine — your seasonal guide to discovering the heart and soul of America. As the air turns crisp and the colors blaze across the countryside, this edition celebrates the very best of autumn in the USA — from harvest festivals and cozy small towns to scenic byways painted in gold and crimson.

Inside, you'll find stories that invite you to slow down, explore deeply, and embrace the wonder of the season. Our Fall 2025 lineup features inspiring highlights like "Autumn's Front Porch: Small Towns That Glow," "Foliage in Fall," "Holiday Hot Spots," and "Midwest Madness." Each piece captures the spirit of exploration — blending comfort, adventure, and the real character of America's hidden gems.

This season, we're especially proud to showcase destinations that perfectly embody authentic American charm — places like Eufaula, Alabama; Liberal, Kansas; Jamestown, North Dakota; Glenwood, Minnesota; and The Dalles, Oregon.

At Explore USA Magazine, we believe travel isn't just about miles — it's about connection: the warmth of a café, the laughter of a parade, or the silence of a mountain overlook. That's why we highlight destinations that celebrate community, authenticity, and character.

So grab your favorite fall drink, settle in, and let these pages take you on a journey through America's most inspiring autumn escapes.

With gratitude,
The Explore USA Magazine Team

sales@exploreusamagazine.com
www.ExploreUSAMagazine.com
727-272-4390

Table of Contents

16-17
Jamestown, North Dakota

18-19
Liberal, Kansas

20-23
Dubuque, Iowa
Where History Meets the Mighty Mississippi

24-27
Niabi Zoo
A Midwest Treasure Reborn

30-31
A Taste of the Holidays Bringing America's Favorite Festive Flavors Home for 2025

12.
Safety Tips

14-15
Midwest Madness

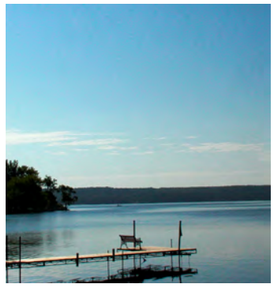
36-37
Autumn's Front Porch
Small Towns That Glow

38. **EXPERIENCE EUFAULA**

Historic Charm, Natural Beauty, Holiday Magic

40. **Autumn's Front Porch**

Marietta, Ohio's Seasonal Embrace



44.

Glenwood, Minnesota

Glenwood is a charming small city nestled in West Central Minnesota and serves as the county seat of Pope County.

Table of Contents

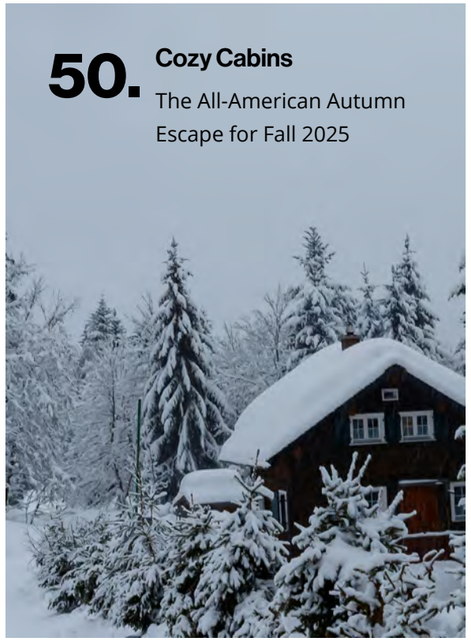
Page - 56
Silent Slayer Ghost Tours

Page - 60
Foliage In Fall

Page - 70
Haunted Highways

Page - 74
Grapevine, Texas

Page - 80
Remax



50. **Cozy Cabins**

The All-American Autumn Escape for Fall 2025

52.

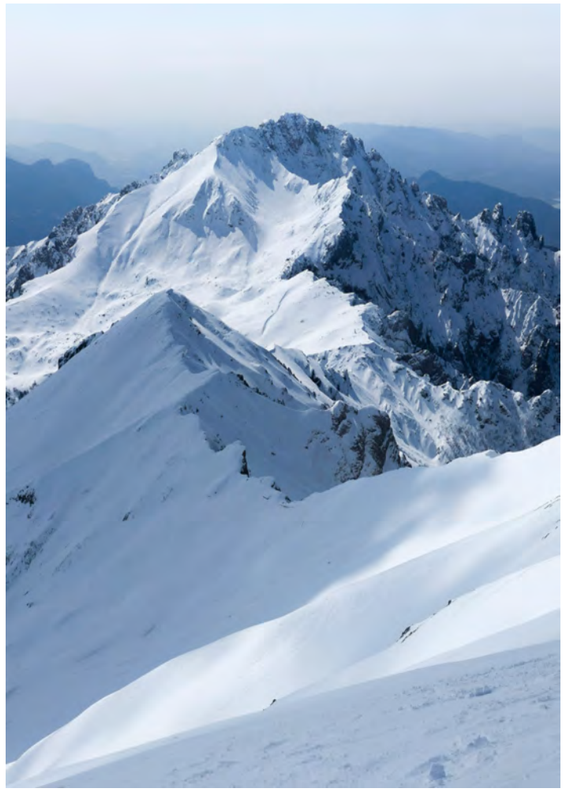
The Dalles, Oregon

Where Autumn's Glow Meets Gorge Tradition

Safety Tips

Travel Smart: Safety Tips for Every Adventure

Staying safe on the road, wherever the journey takes you. Whether you're setting off on a weekend getaway or a cross-country adventure, travel is about discovery, connection, and memory-making. But just as important as choosing the perfect destination is making sure you stay safe while you explore. With a little preparation and awareness, you can protect yourself, your loved ones, and your peace of mind. Here are some tried-and-true safety tips every traveler should keep close.



Top Travel Safety Tips

Keep Copies of Important Documents

Make digital and paper copies of your passport, driver's license, and itinerary. Store digital versions securely in your email or cloud storage.

Share Your Itinerary

Let a trusted friend or family member know where you'll be and when you plan to return. It's a simple step that ensures someone always knows your whereabouts.

Stay Aware of Your Surroundings

When sightseeing, avoid distractions like wearing both earbuds or staring at your phone for long periods. Awareness helps deter pickpockets and keeps you safe in unfamiliar places.

Use Reliable Transportation

Book rides through trusted services, check license plates carefully, and avoid unmarked or unofficial vehicles. If renting a car, give it a quick safety check before hitting the road.

Blend In Where You Can

Avoid drawing unnecessary attention to yourself by leaving flashy jewelry or expensive electronics tucked away. Dress comfortably and respectfully according to local customs.

Secure Your Belongings

Use a cross-body bag or money belt for essentials, and keep hotel rooms safe with portable door locks or safes when available.

Stay Connected

Carry a portable charger to keep your phone alive. Apps with offline maps and translation tools can be lifesavers in spots with poor reception.

Watch Your Health

Stay hydrated, pack a basic first-aid kit, and bring any prescription medications in original containers. If heading abroad, check travel advisories and vaccination requirements.

Trust Your Instincts

If a situation feels off, it probably is. Never be afraid to walk away, change plans, or say no.

Know Local Emergency Numbers

911 is standard in the U.S., but abroad, numbers vary. Look them up before you arrive and keep them written down as well as stored in your phone.

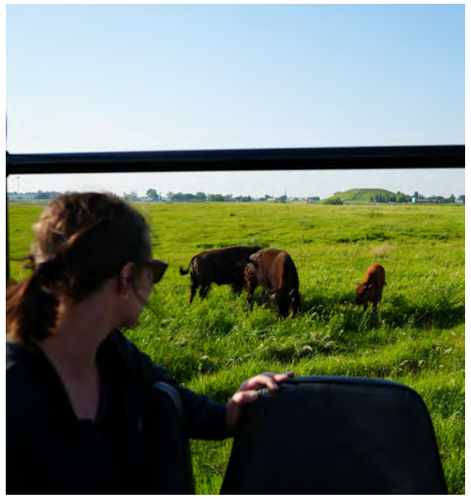
Extra Layer of Peace of Mind

Smart travel isn't about being fearful — it's about being prepared. By practicing simple safety habits, you'll spend less time worrying and more time soaking in the views, tastes, and experiences that make a trip memorable. Whether you're boarding a flight, cruising down a scenic byway, or wandering a new downtown, these safety practices are your travel toolkit for every adventure.

Midwest Madness

From the rolling plains to the lakeside towns, the Midwest is brimming with hidden gems and unforgettable adventures. This feature dives into the heart of America's heartland, where charming small towns meet big seasonal celebrations, outdoor escapes, and the warm hospitality the region is famous for. Whether it's winter festivals, cozy main streets, or unexpected cultural finds, "Midwest Madness" showcases why this region belongs at the top of every traveler's list.

Jamestown, North Dakota



The best trips become more than memories. They become traditions. A photo you take every year. A quiet fishing spot that feels like yours. A place that feels familiar, even the first time you visit. That's the kind of experience you'll find in Jamestown, North Dakota.

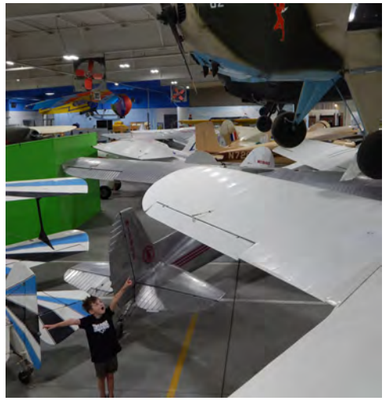
Start with a selfie at the World's Largest Buffalo. This 26-foot-tall concrete monument has greeted travelers since 1959 and still draws smiles today. Nearby, the North American Bison Discovery Center brings you face to face with live bison and shares the story of these animals and their place on the prairie.

Families love the calm waters and wide shores of the Jamestown Reservoir. Spend the afternoon fishing, paddling, or relaxing near the water. Stroll through Frontier Village and explore a collection of historic buildings, local art, and pioneer-era storefronts. Visit the 1883 Historic Stutsman County Courthouse, the oldest courthouse still standing in the state, and walk through the history of Dakota Territory.

Whether you stay for the day or for the weekend, Jamestown offers something simple and lasting. It's a place where families come together, stories begin, and traditions take root.

Every season brings something new. Summer events like Buffalo Days, the Stutsman County Fair, and the Fort Seward Wagon Train welcome visitors with food, fun, and small-town charm. Local shops, parks, and trails give you more to explore every time you return.

DISCOVER
JAMESTOWN
NORTH DAKOTA
START YOUR FAMILY TRADITION
Plan your visit at



Liberal, Kansas

In far Southwest Kansas, where the horizon stretches wide and skies seem endless, sits a community built on an unusual promise: generosity. Long before it was a town, Liberal was simply known as “the place with the liberal well.”

The story goes that pioneer S.S. Rogers offered travelers free water from his well, unlike neighboring ranchers who charged for every bucket. Weary pioneers crossing the prairie began to say, “That’s the liberal well,” and in time, the phrase was shortened to just Liberal. Out of this spirit of openness, a town was born. More than a century later, that welcoming attitude still defines the city.

Today, Liberal extends its hospitality through a blend of history, culture, and unique attractions that capture the imagination of visitors from across the country.

Of course, no visit to Liberal would be complete without a journey to Oz. The town is the “official hometown” of Dorothy Gale, and at Dorothy’s House and the Land of Oz, the classic film comes to life. Tours begin in a restored 1907 farmhouse, where guides sometimes dressed as Dorothy lead guests through rooms that feel like they belong on a Kansas farm. Then it’s on to a 5,000-square-foot Land of Oz experience, filled with movie memorabilia, including a model replica of Dorothy’s house used in the tornado scene of the 1939 production.

VISIT LIBERAL

One of the city’s proudest treasures is the Coronado Museum, named for Spanish explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado, who led his expedition through this very region in 1541. A remarkable artifact, a Spanish horse bit believed to have been left behind by Coronado’s men is among the museum’s prized exhibits. An eight-foot bronze statue of the conquistador greets visitors turning off Pancake Boulevard. Inside, displays range from Native American heritage to frontier life in the Kansas Territory, weaving together centuries of stories.

For those who prefer wings over wheels, the Mid-America Air Museum is a marvel. Housing more than 100 aircraft, it is the largest general aviation museum in Kansas. The collection began in 1986 but grew exponentially when retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Tom A. Thomas Jr. donated dozens of planes in the late 1990s. Walking among the aircraft, visitors encounter everything from experimental designs to a plane like the smallest plane ever used as Air Force One by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The experience is a reminder of how innovation and ambition have always propelled America forward.

The arts thrive at Baker Arts Center, where local, regional, and national artists showcase their work. Workshops, music evenings and community events make it a lively gathering place year-round. Visitors are invited to come engage in creative play and create in multiple mediums.

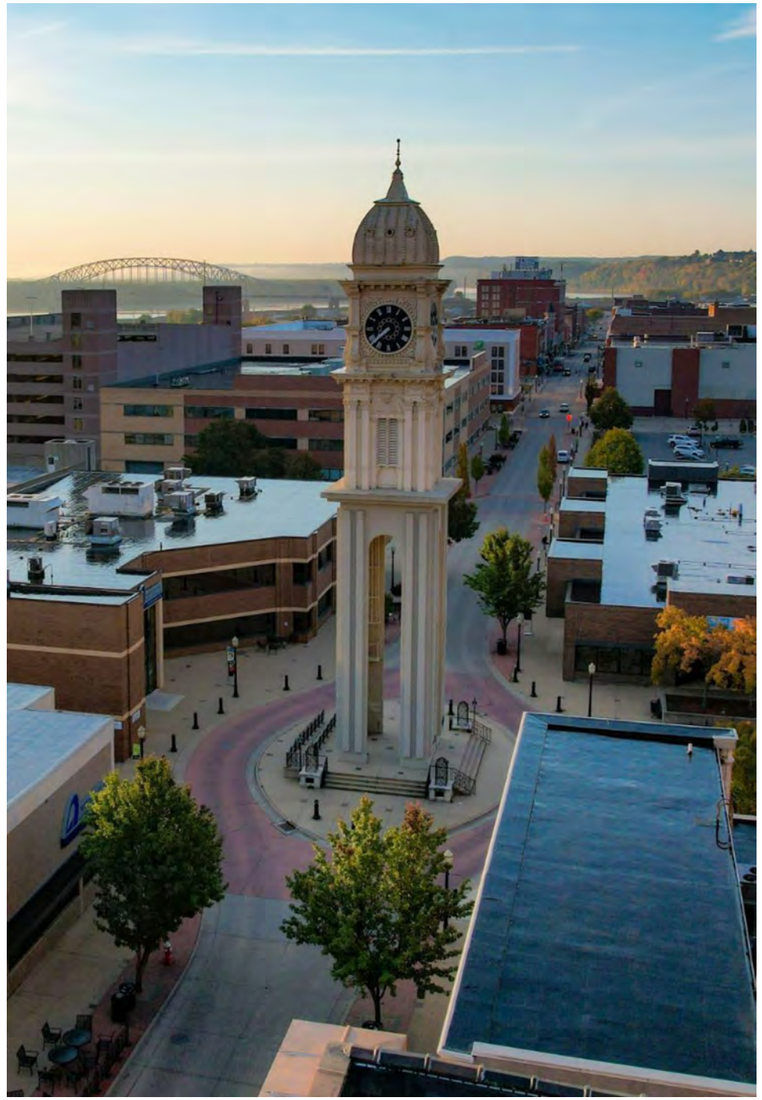
Perhaps the most whimsical tradition is International Pancake Day, held annually on Shrove Tuesday. The celebration begins with a community pancake breakfast and builds toward the highlight event: a transatlantic race between Liberal and Olney, England. Women in both towns dash down their streets, holding pancakes in skillets as they go. Results are shared live, and the international champion is crowned. The day also includes a parade, children’s races and a Shriving Service.

Beyond the headline attractions, the town offers simple pleasures golf courses, a family water park, a six-screen movie theater, and even the world’s largest book on the front of Memorial Library. Nearby, the Arkalon wildlife area provides trails, camping, fishing, and some of the region’s best birdwatching.

From its beginnings as a haven of kindness on the prairie to its role today as a hub of history and hospitality, Liberal is a community that welcomes visitors with open arms.

Dubuque, Iowa

Where History Meets the Mighty Mississippi



Perched on the limestone bluffs of the Mississippi River, Dubuque is a city that captures the essence of the Midwest while offering an unexpected blend of heritage, natural beauty, and small-city warmth. As one of the oldest communities west of the river, it carries the kind of character that only comes with time streets lined with 19th-century architecture, riverfront paths that invite exploration, and neighborhoods that feel both familiar and distinctive. For travelers seeking authenticity, Dubuque is a reminder that some of the best stories come from cities that don't always shout the loudest.

The River at Its Heart

The Mississippi has shaped every chapter of Dubuque's story. In the 1800s, it was the city's highway for commerce, connecting local lumber mills and factories to the wider world. Today, the riverfront serves a different role: a gathering place for relaxation and inspiration. Families stroll along landscaped promenades, anglers cast lines in quiet backwaters, and couples find their favorite spots to watch sunsets turn the water a molten orange. The sheer scale of the river, moving with both power and calm, makes it impossible to ignore. It is both backdrop and anchor for life here.

A City Written in Brick and Stone

Dubuque's downtown is a showcase of architectural resilience. Red-brick warehouses that once stored goods have been repurposed into loft apartments, art studios, and cafés. Church steeples punctuate the skyline, while Victorian mansions cling to hillsides as reminders of the city's industrial past. Even modest neighborhoods tell stories: simple cottages, once homes to river workers, now sit alongside restored homes whose details gingerbread trim, ornate windows speak to prosperity from another era. Unlike places that erase their past, Dubuque embraces it. A walk through its streets feels like leafing through a living history book.

Natural Landscapes Beyond Expectation

When many people picture Iowa, they imagine wide plains. Dubuque challenges that assumption with its geography of rolling hills and wooded bluffs. From high overlooks, visitors can gaze into three states at once Iowa, Wisconsin, and Illinois where farmland meets forest in a patchwork of color. Outdoor enthusiasts find trails winding through woodlands that change with the seasons: lush green in summer, fiery crimson in autumn, and snow-dusted serenity in winter. The Mississippi itself invites boating and kayaking, while nearby parks provide space for birdwatching, hiking, and quiet picnics.

Culture Rooted in Community

Dubuque's greatest strength may be its people. Festivals celebrate everything from music and art to food traditions handed down through generations. Family-owned shops and restaurants anchor the downtown, offering everything from hearty Midwestern fare to creative modern dining. Farmers' markets buzz with energy on summer weekends, while winter events bring residents together in cozy, welcoming spaces. This is a city that doesn't try to reinvent itself with flash; instead, it thrives on continuity and genuine pride. Visitors often remark on how quickly they feel included, as though the community is extending an open invitation to participate in its story.

A City of Arts and Innovation

For a city of its size, Dubuque offers a surprising variety of cultural outlets. Art galleries showcase local and regional talent, while theaters present everything from classic plays to contemporary performances. Murals brighten once-quiet corners of downtown, turning walls into storytelling canvases. Even the reimagining of old industrial spaces into cultural hubs speaks to the city's creative spirit. It's a place where history isn't just preserved in museums it's actively repurposed into something fresh. That balance between tradition and reinvention is one of Dubuque's most appealing traits.

Seasons of Experience

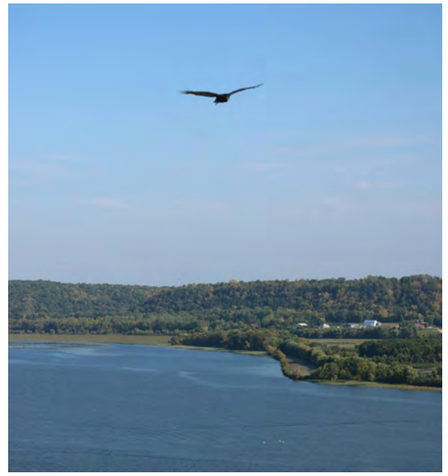
Each season brings its own personality. Spring is marked by blossoms along the hillsides and the return of river activity. Summer brings outdoor concerts, street fairs, and long evenings when the sunset lingers late into the night. Autumn may be the most dramatic, as the bluffs blaze with red and gold, drawing visitors who come for foliage drives and crisp outdoor hikes. Winter transforms the city into something quieter yet equally inviting snow along the rooftops, warm gatherings indoors, and scenic views of the Mississippi iced over in silver stillness.

A Spirit That Welcomes

At its core, Dubuque's charm lies in the way it balances past and present. Historic buildings and riverfront roots ground it firmly, but forward-looking projects revitalized districts, cultural events, and youthful energy from area colleges ensure it never feels stagnant. The city honors where it has been while embracing where it is going. This spirit of balance is what makes Dubuque memorable: it isn't trying to compete with bigger Midwestern metros, nor does it pretend to be something it's not. Instead, it leans into its strengths authenticity, heritage, and connection.

Food and Flavor

No portrait of Dubuque would be complete without mentioning its culinary character. Here, dining is both hearty and creative. Traditional supper clubs and taverns offer comfort foods rooted in Midwest sensibilities, while newer restaurants bring inventive twists that surprise the palate. Local breweries and coffee shops create gathering spots that buzz with conversation. Farmers' markets showcase the bounty of the region, from fresh produce to artisanal baked goods. The dining scene is less about trends and more about authenticity a reflection of the city itself.



Why Dubuque Matters

In a travel world filled with noise and spectacle, Dubuque offers something rare: sincerity. It's a city that doesn't need slogans to impress. Instead, it shines as a place that knows who it is and welcomes others to discover it on their own terms. For travelers seeking a destination that feels both grounded and inspiring, Dubuque delivers. Its riverfront vistas, historic streets, and warm community spirit are not just reasons to visit they are reasons to remember.

Niabi Zoo

A Midwest Treasure Reborn

Gateway to the Midwest Wild

In the quiet community of Coal Valley, Illinois, a zoo sits nestled in 287 acres of preserved woodland. Niabi Zoo is not the biggest in the country, nor is it the oldest. But to the Midwest, it is something more precious: a place where conservation comes to life, where families discover wonder together, and where resilience is written into the very story of the land.

Sidebar: Midwest Travel Distances

Chicago – 165 miles (~3 hrs)
St. Louis – 240 miles (~4 hrs)
Des Moines – 170 miles (~3 hrs)
Madison – 150 miles (~3 hrs)

"Explore Niabi – Get to know the stories, facts and habits of our world's wildlife."

The zoo is remarkably accessible. Families from across the heartland make the trip: just 165 miles (three hours) from Chicago, 240 miles (four hours) from St. Louis, 170 miles (under three hours) from Des Moines, and about 150 miles (under three hours) from Madison, Wisconsin. The central location means Niabi has become a natural meeting point for the region, an easy weekend road trip that connects major cities to nature's doorstep.

Step inside and you'll find 40 acres of exhibits alive with more than 600 animals from nearly 200 species. Towering giraffes, endangered rhinos, playful primates, and delicate amphibians all share space here. But beyond the collection of species lies a mission that resonates deeply: "Working today to assure a better tomorrow for all living things."

That philosophy isn't a tagline. It's a daily promise to the animals, to the visitors, and to the community that calls Niabi its own.

History & Identity

Niabi Zoo's roots reach back to 1959, when a private menagerie known as McLain's Wild Animal Farm entertained curious visitors. Just four years later, in 1963, philanthropist Patti Wiman purchased the farm and donated it to the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District. That generous act transformed a roadside attraction into a civic treasure: a zoo owned by the people, run for the people, and devoted to conservation.

The name itself carries deep meaning. "Niabi," taken from the Osage language, means "the fawn spared by the hunter." It reflects a timeless ethic of compassion and stewardship, a reminder that humanity's greatest strength lies not in domination, but in restraint and care.

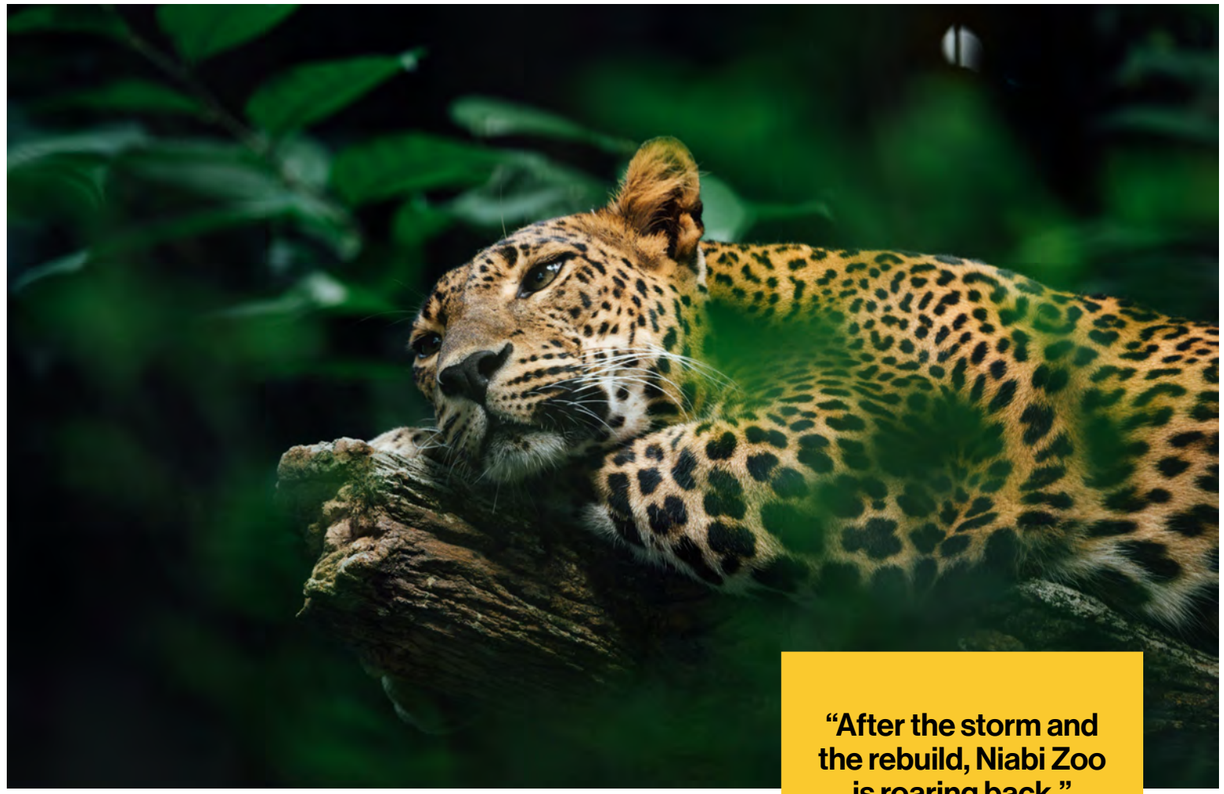
Through the decades, Niabi has grown in sophistication. What began as a modest collection of animals has become a respected institution with global connections. Today, Niabi participates in international breeding programs, contributes to species survival databases, and hosts experts who share their knowledge with Midwest audiences.
Still, for all its reach, Niabi remains grounded in community. It is a place where grandparents recall childhood visits, where parents bring children for their first zoo day, and where traditions are passed on in the laughter of families riding the Endangered Species Carousel.

Social media channels

Sidebar: Quick Facts

40 acres of exhibits within a 287-acre preserve
600+ animals representing nearly 200 species
Seasonal schedule: April–October

Owned and managed by Rock Island County Forest Preserve District



“After the storm and the rebuild, Niabi Zoo is roaring back.”

Storms, Struggles & Renewal

The Midwest is no stranger to weather’s fury, and Niabi Zoo knows that reality firsthand. In January 2024, nearly a week of heavy snow fell across the Quad Cities region. The weight of more than two feet of snow collapsed structures, damaging the carousel canopy, parts of the aviary, and the outdoor cat house.

It was a moment of crisis. The leopards among the zoo’s most charismatic residents were temporarily relocated to partner facilities for their safety. Exhibits were closed, construction crews brought in, and the community held its breath.

But resilience is as much a part of Niabi’s DNA as conservation. Within months, work began on rebuilding the Big Cat Habitat. By summer 2025, the project was complete. The new habitat offered expanded space, improved enrichment opportunities, and modernized guest viewing areas. Snow leopards, amur leopards, and an African leopard now roam environments designed to prioritize both welfare and visibility.

The price tag about $1.5 million was steep. Yet the community rallied, supporting the effort with donations and advocacy. What emerged was more than repaired buildings. It was a renewed sense of pride, a statement that Niabi Zoo would not be bowed by hardship.

Animals, Habitats & Safe Haven Stories

For many visitors, the magic of Niabi lies in its balance of scale. It is large enough to hold awe-inspiring animals, yet small enough to explore without fatigue. Each turn brings new discoveries: giraffes stretching their necks to nibble browse, colobus monkeys flashing through the primate exhibit, or white rhinos moving slowly with prehistoric grace.

Inside the Discovery Center, biodiversity shines. Children press their faces to glass where clownfish dart among coral. Reptiles shift color and texture under dimmed lights. Amphibians from across the globe delicate frogs, mysterious axolotls share space with exotic insects and otters whose playful splashes bring laughter to the halls.

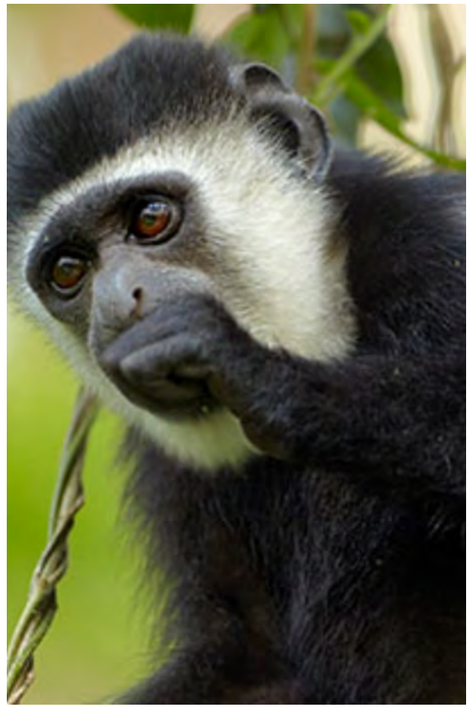
But Niabi’s story isn’t just about display. Increasingly, it is about sanctuary. The zoo provides safe homes for animals seized from the illegal wildlife trade, surrendered by overwhelmed owners, or displaced when other facilities closed. In recent years, Niabi has welcomed fennec foxes with oversized ears, chattering squirrel monkeys, vibrant macaws, and tortoises that may live for a century.

Each of these rescues tells a story. Each animal embodies the mission that the zoo champions daily: responsibility, compassion, and a better tomorrow.

“Providing a safe, stable environment for these animals is part of our responsibility as an accredited zoo.”

Sidebar: Family Favorites

Niabi Zoo Express Train
Endangered Species Carousel
Feeding Stations (koi ponds & domestic animals)
Discovery Center aquatics & reptiles



Enrichment & Guest Experience

Behind every habitat at Niabi is a team dedicated to enrichment. For snow leopards, it might mean hidden scents tucked inside logs. For primates, puzzles that challenge problem-solving skills. For rhinos, new textures and browse that encourage natural feeding behaviors. Seasonal changes add variety pumpkins carved for Halloween, ice blocks in the summer, or evergreen branches in winter.

Guests are often invited into this process. Enrichment demonstrations reveal how keepers stimulate natural behaviors, turning passive viewing into active education. Parents and children leave with a new appreciation for the work that goes into keeping animals mentally and physically engaged.

“Our animals receive enrichment multiple times a day to encourage natural behavior, choice, and mental engagement.”

Niabi balances this with attractions that feel timeless. The Zoo Express Train winds through leafy paths, giving families a restful vantage point. The Endangered Species Carousel spins to music, each carved animal a reminder of the fragile species it represents. Feeding stations—whether it’s tossing pellets to koi or brushing goatsbring tactile connections that linger long after the visit.

The effect is more than entertainment. It is empathy. By offering fun that connects to purpose, Niabi ensures guests walk away not just smiling, but caring.

“This fall, Niabi Zoo celebrates the season with events that connect families, conservation, and Midwest traditions.”

Education, Conservation & Midwest Traditions

Education has always been at the heart of Niabi’s mission. Zoo Camps immerse children ages 4–13 in animal care, games, and conservation lessons. Classes and behind-the-scenes tours provide tailored experiences for learners of all ages. Zoo2U brings this mission offsite, traveling to schools, libraries, and senior centers with animals and educators in tow.

The impact stretches globally. Niabi contributes animal records to international databases that track fertility, genetics, and survival across species. These data points are essential for breeding programs that maintain healthy populations of endangered animals. By participating, Niabi ensures that its work in Coal Valley ripples outward, supporting conservation on a worldwide scale.

Fall offers some of the zoo’s most memorable moments. Free admission days in September and October make access easier for families. “Boo at the Zoo,” held on October weekends, transforms the grounds into a family-friendly Halloween adventure with costumes, pumpkins, and festive enrichment. On October 30, Halloween Animal Enrichment Day treats animals to carved pumpkins and autumn-themed surprises.

It is here, in these seasonal traditions, that Niabi’s dual identity shines: as a global conservation partner, and as a Midwest hometown treasure.

Closing

Niabi Zoo is not just an attraction. It is a story of resilience, compassion, and community. It is the Midwest at its best: practical yet imaginative, small-town yet globally minded, rooted in the land yet reaching for a better tomorrow.

Here, in Coal Valley, children meet giraffes eye-to-eye, families ride carousels that remind them of endangered species, and conservationists see the fruits of their work in thriving habitats. Here, too, storms are endured, habitats rebuilt, and missions renewed.

At Niabi Zoo, the Midwest finds its voice in the language of wildlife. And for visitors, that voice is unforgettable.

A Taste of the Holidays Bringing America's Favorite Festive Flavors Home for 2025

When the last leaves fall and the air turns crisp and bright, kitchens across the United States come alive with the spirit of the holidays. From coast to coast, ovens hum, stovetops bubble, and families gather around counters dusted in flour, sharing recipes passed down like treasured heirlooms. These dishes aren't just food they're comfort, nostalgia, and connection all served up on a plate.

This holiday season, as travelers settle in from the year's adventures, there's no better way to celebrate than by bringing America's coziest culinary traditions to your own table. Whether you live in a mountain cabin, a small-town farmhouse, or a city apartment, these timeless flavors invite you to slow down, gather close, and taste a bit of holiday magic no plane ticket required.

Picture a chilly December morning in the Smoky Mountains, where the fog rolls through the valleys and the smell of buttermilk biscuits drifts from the kitchen. There, holiday breakfasts are a simple ritual done right: a warm pan of fluffy biscuits, brushed with melted butter and topped with a peppery sausage gravy that feels like a hug from the inside out. It's the kind of meal that tastes even better when shared with sleepy kids, old friends, or whoever wanders in from the cold.

Farther north, New England's cranberry bogs offer a tangy twist that has brightened holiday tables for generations. Fresh cranberry relish tart, sweet, and zesty is a small bowl that makes a big statement. Chopped cranberries, a whole orange, and just enough sugar come together to cut through the richness of turkey, ham, or roast beef, reminding us that sometimes the simplest recipes carry the loudest memories.

In the heartland, the Midwest knows how to comfort a crowd when the snow starts to fall. Sweet potato casserole fluffy, warm, and crowned with a buttery blanket of brown sugar and pecans is more than just a side dish. It's a dish that brings second helpings, stories told across the table, and sighs of contentment as the last spoonful is scooped up. It's the taste of family gatherings, laughter, and warmth that lingers long after dessert.

No holiday feast feels complete in the South without a slice of pecan pie. In cozy kitchens from Georgia to Texas, the scent of toasted nuts and caramelized sugar drifting from the oven signals that the season's best moments are about to begin. Each slice flaky crust, gooey filling, and that unmistakable nutty crunch is a

Out in the misty Pacific Northwest, the chill of winter calls for something to warm your hands as well as your heart. Simmering a pot of mulled cider, heavy with cinnamon sticks, cloves, and a splash of orange, fills the kitchen with an orchard's worth of winter comfort. It's the perfect companion for decorating the tree, playing cards by the fire, or simply pausing to watch the snow drift down outside. And if the grown-ups feel like adding a splash of bourbon or rum, well that's the season's little secret.

From the Smokies to the Cascades, America's holiday recipes remind us that home is more than a place it's a feeling. It's the smell of something delicious in the oven, the clink of mugs and plates, and the easy warmth of gathering close when the world outside feels cold and dark.

So this holiday season, roll up your sleeves, tie on an apron, and carry on the small traditions that make this time of year so special. Share the recipes that tell your family's story. Taste the flavors that connect us from coast to coast. And above all, remember that the best part of every holiday table is the people who gather around it.

Here's to good food, good company, and the simple joy of a warm kitchen the true heart of an American holiday.

Pumpkin Spice Lattes: Autumn in a Cup

Few things announce fall in America quite like the pumpkin spice latte. This seasonal favorite blends rich espresso, frothy milk, and a medley of warm spices—cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, and clove. First popularized in the early 2000s, the drink has since become an autumn tradition in both bustling cities and small-town cafés.

From coast to coast, communities make the PSL their own. In Portland, Oregon, indie roasters use house-made syrups and organic pumpkin. In Burlington, Vermont, baristas drizzle maple syrup to add a local twist. And in Asheville, North Carolina, cozy coffee shops pair PSLs with pumpkin breads from nearby bakeries.

The pumpkin spice latte is more than a drink—it's a seasonal ritual. Ordering your first cup each fall feels like stepping into autumn itself, wrapped in flavors of nostalgia and comfort.

DIY Pumpkin Spice Latte Recipe

- 2 cups milk (dairy or oat)
- 2 tbsp pumpkin puree
- 1–2 tbsp maple syrup or sugar
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice blend
- ½ tsp vanilla
- ½ cup espresso or strong coffee

☕ Heat milk, puree, and spices until steamy. Stir in vanilla and coffee. Top with whipped cream and cinnamon.

"Pumpkin spice lattes capture more than flavor—they're a celebration of fall itself."

Harvest Chili Recipe

- 1 lb ground beef or turkey
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 2 cups sweet corn
- 2 cans diced tomatoes
- 1 can kidney beans, drained
- 1 tbsp chili powder

🍲 Brown meat and onion, add rest, simmer 30 minutes. Serve with cornbread.

Midwest Fall Foods: A Harvest of Comfort

The Midwest is often called America's breadbasket, and nowhere is that more evident than in autumn. With harvest in full swing, towns across the region celebrate seasonal foods that blend farm traditions with cozy comfort.

Sweet corn lingers into October, roasted on the cob at county fairs. Pumpkins fill farm stands, turning into soups, breads, and classic pies. Crisp apples become cider and caramel-dipped treats at orchard festivals. And in Minnesota, wild rice—a native grain—stars in soups and casseroles.

Travelers can taste the best of the season in Traverse City, Michigan, known for apple orchards and fall festivals; Madison, Wisconsin, where farmers' markets overflow with pumpkins and squash; and Des Moines, Iowa, home to chili cook-offs and hearty Midwestern flavors.

"Every bite of Midwest fall food connects people to the land and to each other."

In the heartland, the Midwest knows how to comfort a crowd when the snow starts to fall. Sweet potato casserole fluffy, warm, and crowned with a buttery blanket of brown sugar and pecans is more than just a side dish. It's a dish that brings second helpings, stories told across the table, and sighs of contentment as the last spoonful is scooped up. It's the taste of family gatherings, laughter, and warmth that lingers long after dessert.

No holiday feast feels complete in the South without a slice of pecan pie. In cozy kitchens from Georgia to Texas, the scent of toasted nuts and caramelized sugar drifting from the oven signals that the season's best moments are about to begin. Each slice flaky crust, gooey filling, and that unmistakable nutty crunch is a sweet promise that the simplest ingredients can still feel like a celebration. Add a dollop of fresh whipped cream, and you have a dessert worthy of any holiday table.

Out in the misty Pacific Northwest, the chill of winter calls for something to warm your hands as well as your heart. Simmering a pot of mulled cider, heavy with cinnamon sticks, cloves, and a splash of orange, fills the kitchen with an orchard's worth of winter comfort. It's the perfect companion for decorating the tree, playing cards by the fire, or simply pausing to watch the snow drift down outside. And if the grown-ups feel like adding a splash of bourbon or rum, well that's the season's little secret.

From the Smokies to the Cascades, America's holiday recipes remind us that home is more than a place it's a feeling. It's the smell of something delicious in the oven, the clink of mugs and plates, and the easy warmth of gathering close when the world outside feels cold and dark.

So this holiday season, roll up your sleeves, tie on an apron, and carry on the small traditions that make this time of year so special. Share the recipes that tell your family's story. Taste the flavors that connect us from coast to coast. And above all, remember that the best part of every holiday table is the people who gather around it.

Here's to good food, good company, and the simple joy of a warm kitchen the true heart of an American holiday.

Autumn's Front Porch

Small Towns That Glow

There's something timeless about a small town in the fall porches lined with pumpkins, lanterns glowing at dusk, and neighbors gathering as the air turns crisp. "Autumn's Front Porch" celebrates those hidden gems where community charm and seasonal beauty come together. From historic streets dressed in golden leaves to festivals that bring everyone outdoors, these are the towns that radiate a cozy, welcoming glow reminding us that the heart of autumn is often found in the simplest places.

EXPERIENCE EUFAULA

Historic Charm, Natural Beauty, Holiday Magic

Nestled on the shores of the beautiful 45,000-acre Lake Eufaula, known as the "Bass Fishing Capital of the World," the city of Eufaula offers visitors an unforgettable blend of natural beauty and historic charm. Outdoor enthusiasts will find no shortage of opportunities, from world-class fishing, boating, and guided kayaking trips to hiking scenic trails along the lake and the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge, home to hundreds of species of birds and wildlife.

Equally captivating is the city's rich history. Eufaula boasts one of the South's most extensive collections of antebellum homes, lining tree-shaded streets of the Seth Lore Historic District that tell the stories of a bygone era. The historic district invites leisurely strolls and guided tours, offering a glimpse into the elegance and culture that shaped the city's past.

Fall in Eufaula is a season filled with festivities, where the warmth of Southern hospitality meets the joy of community traditions. Mark your calendars for these can't-miss events:

- EufaulaFest, October 11–12, 2025 – A vibrant arts and crafts festival showcasing regional talent.
- MainStreet Eufaula's Trunk or Treat, October 31 – A family-friendly Halloween celebration downtown.
- Downtown Christmas Open House, November 3 – Kick off the holiday season with boutique shopping, amazing dining options, and holiday cheer.
- After Thanksgiving Shopping Event & Iron Bowl Saturday, November 27–28 – Shop local and celebrate Alabama's favorite football rivalry.
- City of Eufaula Christmas Tree Lighting & Chamber's Cookies with Santa, December 1 at 6 p.m.
- Eufaula Chamber of Commerce Downtown Christmas Parade, December 2 at 5 p.m.
- Eufaula Heritage Association's Christmas Tour of Homes, December 6 – Step inside historic homes beautifully decorated for the holidays. www.eufaulapilgrimage.com
- Mistletoe Market, December 6 – Unique holiday shopping in downtown Eufaula.
- Santa Stroll, December 13 – A festive daytime downtown shopping Saturday. You might even run into Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

So whether you're drawn by the lake, the history, or the holiday celebrations, Eufaula is the perfect destination for your next getaway. Experience Eufaula for a weekend or a lifetime.

Social media channels
Share a Moment in Historic
EUFAULA
Alabama
This Season, Discover the Hidden Gem of the South!
Eufaula, Alabama
is a charming town
steeped in history, culture,
and natural beauty.
From historic antebellum homes
and serene lakeside views
to delightful local shops
and delectable Southern cuisine.
Eufaula offers an unforgettable
escape worth sharing.
Coming this Season:
EufaulaFest 2025 | October 11 & 12
Southern creativity with artisans, live music,
and local flavors under ancient oaks.
Visit: EufaulaFest.art
Christmas Tour of Homes | Dec. 6
Tour stunning historic homes,
including the iconic Shorter Mansion
and Fendall Hall, decked in holiday splendor.
Visit: eufaulapilgrimage.com
Fendall Hall, 1880, was once a private residence and is now owned by the
Alabama Historical Commission. The museum is open for public viewing all year.
It is one of more than 700 historic structures located in Eufaula.
Discover the Heart and Soul of the South!
EUFAULA
BARBOUR COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
TOURIST APPROVED
Explore USA Ad.indd 1
8/24/25 6:39 PM

Autumn's Front Porch

Marietta, Ohio's Seasonal Embrace

Autumn has a way of turning entire towns into living storybooks. Leaves shift from green to gold, red, and bronze, creating a canopy that feels almost theatrical. In Marietta, Ohio—a historic riverfront town where the Muskingum and Ohio Rivers meet—fall is not just a change of season. It's a performance that unfolds on every front porch, down tree-lined streets, and across the town's Victorian homes that seem built to showcase autumn's beauty.

A Town Built for Porches

Marietta is the kind of place where porches matter. The historic district is filled with 19th-century Victorian homes, many adorned with wraparound verandas and decorative railings. In the fall, those porches become gathering places that double as seasonal displays. Pumpkins cluster on steps, rocking chairs are pulled forward with plaid throws, and lanterns flicker as twilight arrives earlier each evening.

"Marietta's porches don't just frame homes they frame the season itself."

The architecture itself lends character to the season. Intricate woodwork and tall windows frame the porches, offering views of treetops that blaze with color along the riverbanks. Even the simplest decoration an apple basket left by the door or a wreath crafted from dried leaves takes on new charm against the backdrop of these homes. Walking through Marietta in October feels like stepping into a painting, where every porch is both a personal retreat and a public invitation.

River Reflections of Autumn

What sets Marietta apart from many other small towns is its relationship with the water. The confluence of the Muskingum and Ohio Rivers provides a reflective stage for autumn's display. On a calm day, the colors of the season double in the water, giving the impression of two worlds—one above and one mirrored below.

Porches that face the river offer some of the best vantage points. Residents and visitors alike settle into chairs with mugs of cider, watching the slow drift of boats against the glow of maple and oak trees. The sound of geese overhead and the steady rhythm of the river complete the picture. It's a kind of seasonal meditation, one that reminds people of how closely tied Marietta is to both nature and history.

Community Traditions on Display

Autumn in Marietta is also marked by community spirit. Local festivals and events transform porches into stages where decorations become part of the celebration. Homes often compete, not formally but in spirit, to create the warmest and most welcoming seasonal displays. Cornstalks stand tall against porch posts, gourds and chrysanthemums spill over steps, and porch lights glow just a little brighter during evening walks.

In late October, trick-or-treaters march up historic staircases, their costumes illuminated by jack-o'-lanterns. Families sit on porches with bowls of candy, chatting with neighbors between the stream of children. Later in the season, porches become gathering places for conversations about football, holiday plans, and the year's final harvests. The rhythm of life slows, yet connections feel stronger.

A Town That Honors Its History

Marietta is Ohio's oldest city, and its heritage is woven into the autumn experience. Many of the homes were built when porches were considered essential for social life—a place to greet neighbors, share stories, and mark the seasons. Walking through the town today, that tradition continues. The porches feel alive, not as relics but as living parts of daily life.

The Victorian and Federal-style architecture blends seamlessly with fall's palette. Intricate spindles and iron railings are framed by crimson ivy. Wide porches, once used to cool off on summer evenings, now host pots of mums and hay bales stacked with pumpkins. Marietta's history breathes through these spaces, proving that tradition and seasonality can co-exist in ways that feel timeless.

The Sensory Experience of Fall

Beyond the visual spectacle, autumn in Marietta engages every sense. The crunch of leaves underfoot echoes down quiet streets. The smell of woodsmoke drifts from chimneys, mingling with the scent of apple pies cooling on windowsills. Porch swings creak softly, keeping rhythm with the rustle of wind through the trees.

Even the river contributes its soundtrack—the lapping of water against docks, the occasional horn of a passing barge. Sitting on a porch, wrapped in a blanket as the sun dips behind the hills, one feels both connected to the town and cocooned by the season.

Celebrating Local Flavors

The porches of Marietta don't just showcase decorations; they also reflect the bounty of the season. Apples, gourds, and squashes often appear as centerpieces, either stacked in baskets or arranged on steps. Farmers' markets in town inspire many of these displays, and residents take pride in weaving local harvests into their decorations.

It's common to see neighbors sharing baked goods on porches—slices of pumpkin bread, mugs of warm cider, or jars of homemade jam. The front porch acts as a bridge between private kitchens and public hospitality, reinforcing the sense that autumn in Marietta is meant to be shared.

Reflection and Renewal

Porches in Marietta also offer quiet space for reflection. Autumn is, after all, a season of transition. As the leaves fall and the days shorten, people find comfort in sitting outside, bundled in sweaters, considering the months behind them and the holidays ahead. There's something grounding about the simplicity of a porch view—the slow movement of the river, the shifting colors of the trees, the passing of neighbors on evening walks.

This reflective quality makes autumn porches not only visually appealing but emotionally restorative. They remind us that change, while inevitable, can be beautiful.

Holding on to the Season

As November moves toward winter, porches in Marietta remain central to daily life. Outdoor heaters or fire pits appear, extending the season just a little longer. Blankets and throws become essential, and neighbors linger on steps, unwilling to retreat indoors too quickly.

Even as the first frost settles, the spirit of welcome endures. Porches remain decorated, lights stay on, and conversations continue. In this way, Marietta teaches an important lesson: autumn is fleeting, but its warmth can last as long as we choose to hold onto it.

"Autumn is fleeting, but Marietta shows us how to hold on a little longer."

A Front Porch Worth Sharing

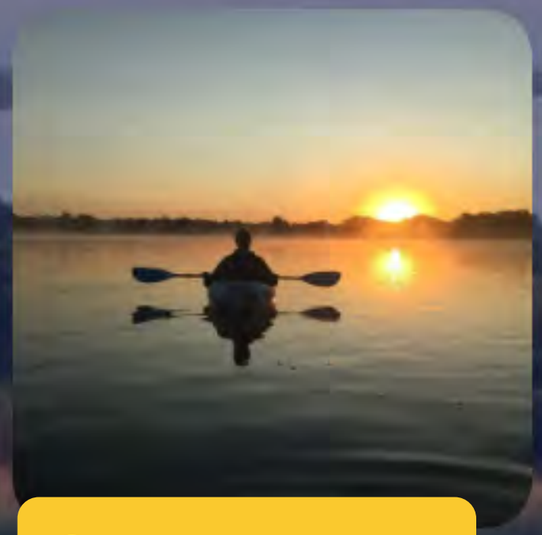
In many ways, Marietta is a town built to illustrate the cover story of autumn. Its riverfront views, historic homes, and strong sense of community all converge on one symbol the front porch. Whether lavishly decorated or simply adorned, these spaces embody what makes the season special: beauty, hospitality, reflection, and a sense of belonging.

As visitors and locals alike experience Marietta in the fall, they discover that autumn's front porch is more than a metaphor. It is a living, breathing part of the town's character—a stage where history, nature, and community come together in one unforgettable season.

"From pumpkins on steps to neighbors on swings, every porch tells a story of welcome."

Glenwood, Minnesota

Glenwood is a charming small city nestled in West Central Minnesota and serves as the county seat of Pope County.



Contact info

Glenwood, Minnesota

Glenwood is a charming small city nestled in West Central Minnesota and serves as the county seat of Pope County. Located about two hours west of Minneapolis, Glenwood sits on the picturesque shores of Lake Minnewaska one of Minnesota's most scenic and popular lakes, and among one of the larger lakes in the state of 10,000 lakes.

No matter which direction you arrive from, the views entering Glenwood are stunning, especially when you catch your first glimpse of Lake Minnewaska. For one of the best panoramic views of the city and lake, visit Mount Lookout.

Glenwood is a vibrant lake community known for great fishing year-round whether it's spring, summer, and fall, or ice fishing in the winter. The downtown area is beautifully maintained, adorned with sailboats, hanging flower baskets, and welcoming signage. The pedestrian-friendly Main Street is perfect for walking or biking and offers a variety of specialty shops, restaurants, and lodging options.

Throughout the year, the Glenwood Welcome Center hosts a variety of events for families. During September and October, you will find our Pope County Farmers Market, located at Barsness Park. The Community Halloween Trick or Treat event, and in December our three week Magical Christmas in Glenwood Celebration. The Glenwood city hosts a variety of community events. The summer festival, Waterama, held the last full weekend of July, is packed with fun activities for all ages. In August, the Pope County Fair brings traditional fair fun, and in February, the winter celebration Winterama takes place on the frozen surface of Lake Minnewaska.

Outdoor recreation is a big part of Glenwood life. The city has two major parks:

- Barsness Park features hiking and biking trails, tent and RV camping, disc golf, and a splash pad and Pickleball courts.
- Glenwood City Park, located across from Lake Minnewaska, offers a basketball court, pickleball courts, and a historic band shell where the popular Music in the Park series is held throughout the summer months' scenic boat cruises on Lake Minnewaska, a public swimming beach, splash pad, several hotels and resorts for visitors.

Glenwood also has a Central Square Arts and Cultural Center and a Carnegie Public Library.
Whether you're coming for a day, staying for a week, or looking for a place to call home, Glenwood is a beautiful, welcoming destination with something for everyone.

A Seasonal Canvas of Possibilities

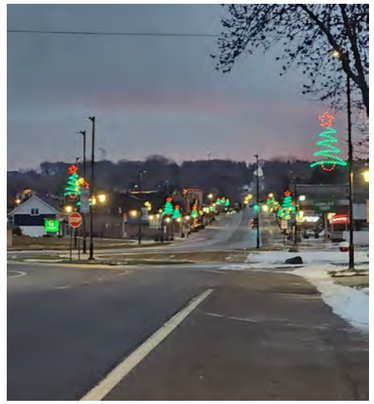
One of Glenwood's greatest strengths is the depth of its seasonal programming. In summer, the lake vicinity teems with life: boating, swimming, fishing, or simply settling in lakeside on a dock as the sun dips low. In winter, the region embraces silence in motion cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ice fishing, and even ice golf during "Winterama" bring a playful edge to the cold months.
Explore Minnesota

But Glenwood doesn't stop at the extremes. Spring ushers in community expositions, clean-ups, Easter celebrations, and the gradual reawakening of campgrounds.
Explore Minnesota

Fall offers festivals, harvest events, and a chance to see the natural colors of Minnesota's transition. In other words, the town is alive year-round, inviting both locals and visitors to partake.

That consistent rhythm is not accidental. It's in many ways the heartbeat of the Welcome Center's mission: to "promote tourism, events and activities" and "enrich lives in the Glenwood Lakes Area."
welcomeglenwood.org

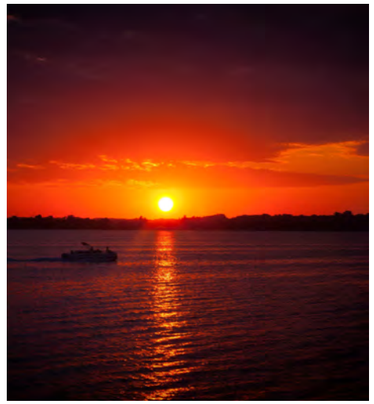
"From Winterama to summer sunsets, Glenwood is alive year-round."



Community Anchors Beyond the Scenery

Glenwood's attractions are not confined to its lakes and trails. The town leans into heritage and community in ways many small places can only aspire to. The Welcome Center partners with the Chamber of Commerce to host events like the Pope County Community Expo—a no-cost showcase of over 150 exhibitors, workshops, entertainment, and family fun.
Google Play +1

There's also a steady calendar of local favorites: Music in the Park, Magic Christmas in Glenwood, Kids' Day, Community Trick-or-Treat, and more.
welcomeglenwood.org +1



The Welcome Glenwood program illustrates how much the town cares about more than just visitors; it cares about people. Since its inception in 2013, the program has aimed to assist newcomers, bridging the gap so that newcomers or residents who still feel new can feel rooted, find resources, and get connected.
welcomeglenwood.org

In that sense, Glenwood positions itself not just as a "nice place to visit," but as a place one might truly call home. The town's motto" Come for a day, stay for a week or live for a lifetime" captures that aspiration.
welcomeglenwood.org +1

Welcoming with Intention

Walking the streets of Glenwood—or meandering its lakeshore—you sense a kind of deliberate hospitality. It shows in how the Welcome Center provides relocation packets, visitor guides, and personal meetings (whether at the visitor's home, place of employment, or another comfortable venue).
welcomeglenwood.org +2

It shows in the way homespun events—Kid's Day, sensory walks, trick-or-treat routes—are woven into a yearlong tapestry.
welcomeglenwood.org +1

But there's also a challenge implicit in all this: how to maintain authenticity while growing. As more people learn about Glenwood's "hidden" charms, can the community preserve the sense of neighborliness, the balance of nature and small-town comfort, and the spaces for both residents and travelers?

Many communities that attract attention struggle with overuse, commercialization, or losing their soul to tourism. Glenwood's success depends not merely on marketing but on stewardship of its natural resources, of its local institutions, and of its communal identity.

Social media channels

"In Glenwood, the seasons aren't just weather they're a way of life."

"It's not about dazzle; it's about invitation."

Why Glenwood Deserves a Closer Look

refreshing alternative: modest scale, generous programming, and a place that doesn't demand to dazzle so much as invite. Want to fish at dawn, stroll quiet streets, join a farmers' market, watch community theater, or try ice-fishing at dusk? You can do all that here.

Glenwood is not a "destination" that oversells itself; it's a place that delivers quietly, steadily, season after season.

If I were to make one plea, it's this: visit Glenwood not to check off "Minnesota town with lakes," but to slow down, connect, and see how the community nurtures a life that skips the clichés. In doing so, you may find it's not only a beautiful getaway, but somewhere you'd want to return to or indeed, stay.

Cozy Cabins

The All-American Autumn Escape for Fall 2025

When the first cold breeze rattles the trees and the forests blaze in reds, golds, and fiery oranges, America's cozy cabins come alive. Tucked deep in the woods, perched on mountain ridges, or hidden beside glassy lakes, these rustic retreats are the perfect antidote to busy lives and crowded schedules. This fall, travelers across the United States are rediscovering the magic of slowing down one cabin at a time.

Picture waking up in a snug log cabin in the Great Smoky Mountains, where the mist floats through ancient valleys and every trail leads to another breathtaking view. By mid-October, the Smokies are a painter's palette of color. Morning's mean steaming coffee on a wraparound porch while birds chatter in the branches overhead. Days are spent hiking to waterfalls or cruising along scenic drives like Newfound Gap Road, and nights wrap you in the warmth of a crackling fireplace or a bubbling outdoor hot tub under a canopy of stars.

Out West, Lake Tahoe calls those craving crisp mountain air and the hush of pine forests. This alpine jewel straddling California and Nevada trades its summer crowds for quiet trails and calm, clear waters when fall arrives. Cabins here range from nostalgic A-frames with vintage ski-lodge charm to modern hideaways with floor-to-ceiling windows framing snow-dusted peaks. Spend your days exploring aspen-lined trails or paddling on the glassy lake before sinking into a fireside armchair as the first flakes drift down outside.

Not to be outdone, the Catskills of upstate New York remind us that you don't have to venture far for a true fall retreat. Just a few hours north of Manhattan, winding roads deliver you to storybook cabins tucked among towering maples and whispering birches. Here, cozy means clawfoot tubs, wood stoves, hammocks strung between trees, and the distant sound of a rushing stream. The Catskills invite you to pick apples, wander art-filled towns like Woodstock, or watch waterfalls tumble down mossy cliffs at Kaaterskill Falls. As dusk settles in, gather around a fire pit for cider and conversation under a blanket of stars.

Farther northwest, Leavenworth, Washington, puts its own alpine spin on the season. This Bavarian-style village sits cradled by the rugged Cascade Mountains, which blaze gold with larch trees each October. After a day on mountain trails or sampling bratwurst and pretzels at the town's Oktoberfest, your cabin retreat awaits with timber beams, soft blankets, and a warm hearth to ward off the evening chill.

Across the country, these cozy cabins are more than just a place to sleep they're an invitation to reconnect. To trade screens for trails, traffic for forest paths, and rushed schedules for slow mornings by the fire. They remind us that the best parts of travel aren't always the places we go, but how we feel when we get there.

This fall, skip the long lines and cross-country flights. Instead, pack your flannel, grab your favorite book, and escape to a cabin deep in America's backyard. Watch the leaves drift down like confetti. Sip something warm. Breathe in pine and woodsmoke. And remember what it feels like to do nothing and everything all at once.
Because when it comes to fall in the USA, nothing says cozy quite like a cabin in the woods.

The Dalles, Oregon

Where Autumn's Glow Meets Gorge Tradition

There are towns that wear autumn lightly, and then there are towns like The Dalles, Oregon, that let the season seep into every corner. Nestled on the banks of the Columbia River and framed by the rugged cliffs of the Gorge, The Dalles shines in fall as a place where history, community, and color meet. It is a small town with a big story, and in October light, it glows.

A Porch with a View

The Dalles' downtown captures that "front porch" feeling at the heart of this feature series. Its streets are lined with historic brick storefronts and Victorian homes that dress themselves for the season. Pumpkins perch on stoops, leaves drift onto century-old sidewalks, and neighbors wave across decorated porches. From Second Street to the hillside neighborhoods, porches here aren't just architectural accents — they are invitations to slow down, sip something warm, and watch the sun sink over the Columbia.

Community at the Core

At the center of that spirit is the Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce and Explore The Dalles Visitor Center, which has been advocating and connecting for decades. They embody the town's cooperative character. Ribbon cuttings, community promotions, and local celebrations are part of their everyday work. That means when a new café opens or a family-owned shop hits a milestone, the whole town knows and takes part.

In a season that emphasizes gathering, this level of civic connection feels especially vivid. Autumn in The Dalles is not just about changing leaves — it's about a town changing together, keeping traditions while embracing growth.

Autumn Highlights in The Dalles

- Rich bold reds and light, crisp fruit-forward whites from Gorge wineries
- Orchard harvests & seasonal cider stands
- Downtown mural walks in golden light
- Stories of Lewis & Clark, the Oregon Trail, and pioneer life at local museums
- National Neon Sign Museum illuminating history from the very beginning of neon
- Nationally known fishing on the Columbia — from giant sturgeon to legendary river "monsters"
- Chamber-hosted ribbon cuttings & community events

"In The Dalles, autumn's glow is more than leaves and sunsets — it's the light of a community thriving together, shaped by pioneers, river legends, and a harvest worth celebrating."

A Season of Taste and Harvest

Few places blend scenery and flavor the way The Dalles does in fall. The surrounding orchards and rolling fields showcase their richest bounty this time of year, from sweet cherries and crisp pears to golden wheat and wine grapes. After the grapes are stomped and the harvest gathered, the community comes together to raise a glass of local wine or craft beer in celebration.

The air carries the earthy notes of pine, fir, and sage, a backdrop for sipping wines from the Gorge. Tasting rooms pour bold, spicy merlots and rich cabernets that warm crisp evenings. Local restaurants lean into the season as well, sourcing from nearby farms and turning harvest into hearty plates. A stroll through town might include a slice of pie from a bakery, a pour of Gorge wine, or a steaming cider enjoyed while admiring murals that splash color across downtown walls.

Social media channels

Murals, Museums, and More

The Dalles doesn't just tell its story in books — it paints it on walls. Murals scattered through downtown capture moments of pioneer life, river history, and community pride. In the golden light of fall, these outdoor galleries glow just as brightly as the trees.

Museums — from Fort Dalles to the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center — add even deeper layers, reminding visitors that this community has been a crossroads for centuries. And the National Neon Sign Museum shines a light of its own, telling the story of neon from its very beginnings and illuminating how signs shaped American culture. Autumn is an especially good time to explore it all, with fewer crowds and a slower rhythm that matches the season.

A Living, Breathing Glow

What truly sets The Dalles apart is that its glow comes not just from scenery but from people. This community is full of stories of new businesses opening, wellness centers expanding, and locals not only chasing their dreams but achieving them. Each new venture adds to the town's warmth and vibrancy.

As porches light up with lanterns and streets fill with festivals, The Dalles shows that small towns can thrive without losing their intimacy. All of it unfolds against sweeping views of the Columbia River in the majestic Gorge that divides the beautiful states of Oregon and Washington — the place we proudly call home. Here, daily life is woven together in a way where everyone knows each other — a true reflection of community in action.

Quick Guides: Peak Fall Foliage by State

Upper Midwest

Week	States at Peak
Late Sept – Early Oct	Minnesota: Late Sept – Early Oct • Wisconsin: Late Sept – Mid Oct • Michigan (UP & Northern): Late Sept – Early Oct
Early – Mid Oct	Michigan (Lower Peninsula): Early – Mid Oct

Central Midwest

Week	States at Peak
Mid Oct	Iowa: Mid Oct
Mid – Late Oct	Illinois: Mid – Late Oct • Nebraska: Mid – Late Oct

Eastern Midwest

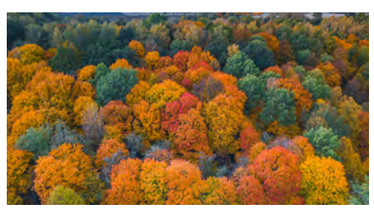
Week	States at Peak
Mid – Late Oct	Indiana: Mid – Late Oct
Mid Oct – Early Nov	Ohio: Mid Oct – Early Nov • Missouri: Mid Oct – Early Nov

Tip Box: How to Time It Right

- Use state tourism "fall color trackers" online for weekly updates.
- Plan drives midweek to avoid crowds.
- Peak color often lasts just 7–10 days in each region.

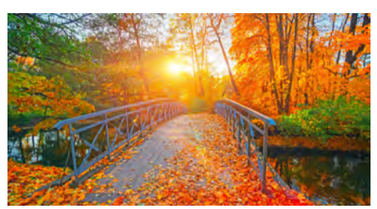
Mini Travel Spotlights: Top 5 Fall Scenic Drives in the Midwest

"Few places rival the Midwest when it comes to autumn roads painted in color."



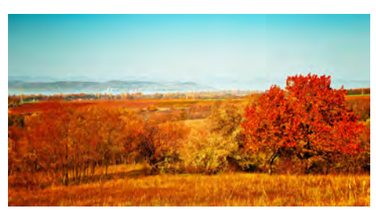
1. Great River Road (Wisconsin & Minnesota)

Follow the Mississippi River as bluffs glow gold and crimson. Small river towns like Pepin and Red Wing make for charming stops.



2. Hocking Hills Scenic Byway (Ohio)

Winding roads through sandstone cliffs, caves, and waterfalls burst with vibrant reds and oranges. Perfect for pairing with a hike in Hocking Hills State Park.



3. Door County Coastal Byway (Wisconsin)

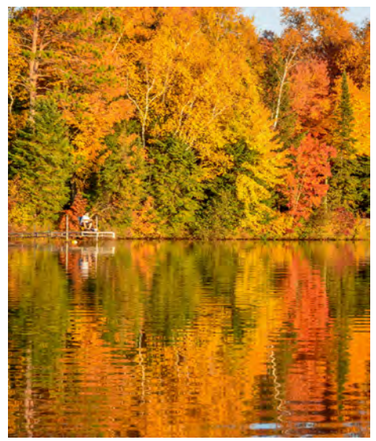
Lighthouse-dotted shores, cherry orchards, and charming villages create one of the Midwest's most photographed fall drives.

4. North Shore Scenic Drive (Minnesota)

Hug the shoreline of Lake Superior from Duluth to Grand Portage. Endless lake views meet fiery maple and birch forests.

5. Covered Bridge Scenic Byway (Ohio)

Travel through Fairfield County's historic covered bridges framed by autumn leaves—a photographer's dream.



Silent Slayer Ghost Tours

Tampa Bay's After-Dark Storytellers (and Ghost Hunters)

"Not all of Florida's residents are living."

OPENER

By day, Tampa Bay dazzles: sailboats stipple the water, cigar smoke lore perfumes Ybor's brick lanes, and the skyline glows a healthy gold. But when the sun dissolves and the palms lift their fronds to the breeze, another city stirs older, stranger, humming with footsteps you can't quite place.

If you want to meet that city, you book a ticket with Silent Slayer Ghost Tours, the Gulf Coast outfit that treats haunted history as both scholarship and stagecraft, and invites you to become part of the investigation. Their walks don't rely on jump scares; they build atmosphere, evidence, and empathy.

Historic Andrews Memorial Chapel in Dunedin a landmark with a haunted reputation.

"We don't guarantee ghosts. We guarantee history and a method for listening."

WHAT SETS THEM APART

Silent Slayer's routes are built from documented events, local records, and folklore that refuses to die. You won't just get a campfire tale—you'll get context: how a hotel changed hands after an unexplained death, why cigar factories became pressure cookers for accidents, and which waterfront tragedies carved themselves into Tampa's collective memory.

Guides are trained performers as much as historians, blending steady narration with investigative instinct. One guide, criminology student Paige Horton, even applies her background in evidence and analysis to heighten the credibility of each stop.

Paranormal investigators using EMF meters at the May-Stringer House.

The result is intimate and immersive. The group pauses at lantern-lit corners, letting the wind, the hush of traffic, or the creak of a gate fill the silence. These gaps become part of the performance—an opportunity for guests to feel the weight of history pressing in.

BECOME THE INVESTIGATOR

On select nights, Silent Slayer ups the ante by placing paranormal tools in guests' hands. The guides bring along EMF meters, spirit boxes, temperature guns, and even dowsing rods.

Sometimes the equipment stays quiet. Other times, strange spikes in energy, voices chattering through static, or a cold draft where none should exist make the group gasp. Nothing is staged, and that unpredictability makes the hunt unforgettable.

Tools of the Night

- EMF Meters – detect spikes in electromagnetic energy
- Spirit Boxes – rapid radio scans where voices sometimes break through
- Temperature Guns – track unexplained cold spots
- Dowsing Rods – old-world yes/no communication

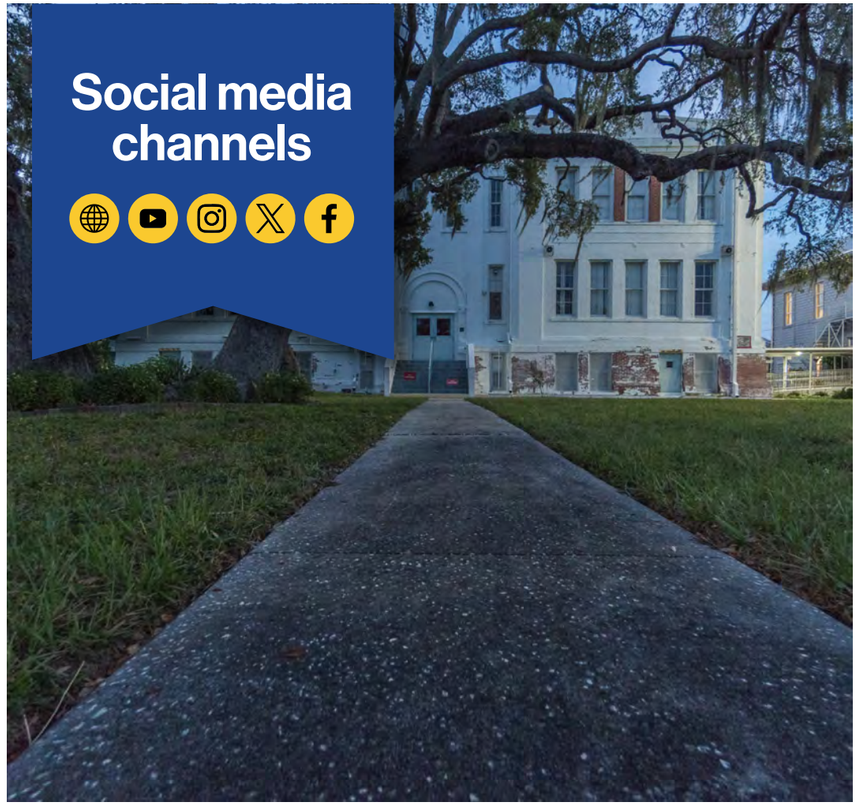
Where They Walk

- Tampa: Haunted hotels, riverfront legends, mob-era crime
- Safety Harbor: Tocobaga echoes, mineral springs, sacred ground
- Tarpon Springs: Sponge-diver heritage, lawman's fatal shot
- Palmetto: Pioneer homes, yellow-fever burials, forgotten graveyards

Old Hamilton County Jail haunted halls with stories carved into the stone.

Rose Cemetery in Tarpon Springs one of the most active sites on the Silent Slayer route.

"The souvenir isn't in the gift shop it's the way you'll never walk these streets the same again."



Private Cemetery Tour in Clearwater a hauntingly personal look at Tampa Bay's past.

Plan Your Night

- Tours depart at dusk
- Last 90–120 minutes
- Book direct at Family-friendly, but mature themes are discussed

HOW TO DO IT RIGHT

Silent Slayer Ghost Tours run year-round, with peak demand during fall and Halloween. Tickets average $30 per person, with private hunts available.

What to bring: Comfortable shoes for brick streets, light layers for breezy nights, and curiosity. Belief is optional. Respect is mandatory.

What you'll take home: A new way of seeing Tampa Bay. That glamorous hotel becomes a ledger of restless guests. That palm-lined lane in Safety Harbor becomes sacred ground. That quiet cemetery becomes a chorus of names not forgotten.

FOLIAGE IN FALL

When autumn sweeps across the country, nature paints the landscape in bold strokes of crimson, amber, and gold. From winding country roads to quiet river valleys, the season transforms ordinary backdrops into breathtaking works of art. “Foliage in Fall” invites readers to experience the magic of crisp mornings, scenic drives, and small towns glowing under canopies of color. It’s a celebration of harvest warmth, community spirit, and the timeless beauty that makes fall travel unforgettable.

Foliage in Fall

Maine’s Rangeley Lakes Region

When people picture Maine in autumn, they often think of coastal lighthouses framed by fiery maples or the dramatic peaks of Acadia National Park. But just inland, far from the traffic of cruise ports and crowded overlooks, lies the Rangeley Lakes Region—a tranquil corner of western Maine where autumn unfolds on its own terms. With vast mountain ridges, deep blue lakes, and a wilderness spirit, this is a place where foliage is as expansive as it is unforgettable.

“In autumn, the Rangeley Lakes feel like the horizon has been painted in fiery hues.”

A Wilderness of Color

At the heart of the Rangeley area are six major lakes, all surrounded by rolling hills and forested ridgelines. In autumn, the landscape becomes a spectacular patchwork of reds, oranges, and yellows reflected in mirror-smooth water. Early morning often brings low fog across the lakes, giving the illusion that the hills are floating islands of color. As the sun rises, the fog lifts to reveal crisp outlines of mountains crowned in gold. Unlike many tourist-heavy foliage destinations, Rangeley offers space—big skies, wide horizons, and stretches of road where the only company might be a loon calling from the water. The sense of openness allows visitors to breathe in fall without distraction.

Scenic By way Highlight

Take the Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway, a 35-mile loop of winding roads and overlooks. Don’t miss Height of Land, where sweeping views of Mooselookmeguntic Lake glow in autumn’s brightest shades.

“Height of Land proves that sometimes the best view is also the quietest.”

Autumn by Water

The lakes themselves are as much a part of the show as the mountains. Early mornings bring fog that lifts to reveal glowing forests mirrored in glassy blue waters.

Scenic Drives Worth the Journey

Few places in the Northeast rival the Rangeley Lakes Scenic Byway. This 35-mile loop weaves through lake country, up into the highlands, and past overlooks that frame the wilderness in every shade of autumn. Height of Land, one of the most famous viewpoints in Maine, offers a sweeping panorama where Mooselookmeguntic Lake spreads out below in a mosaic of islands and shoreline forest. In October, it feels as though the entire horizon has been painted in fiery hues. Smaller roads, like those leading to Richardson Lake or up toward Oquossoc, are equally rewarding. Travelers will find themselves slowing down, not just for the winding curves but for the sheer number of vistas begging for a pause.

Hiking into the Season

For those who prefer to see fall foliage on foot, the Rangeley region has no shortage of trails. Bald Mountain provides a relatively short climb with an impressive payoff: a fire tower at the summit that delivers 360-degree views of lakes and mountains aflame with autumn color. Longer treks, such as the Appalachian Trail section crossing Saddleback Mountain, immerse hikers in high-elevation forests before revealing open ridgelines that seem to stretch forever. The crisp air, the crunch of leaves underfoot, and the quiet of the wilderness create an immersive fall experience few places can match.

“Here, fall isn’t staged for crowds it’s lived fully by the land itself.”

A True Alternative to the Coast

What makes the Rangeley Lakes Region so appealing is that it feels both remote and accessible. It’s far enough from Maine’s busy coastal attractions to remain peaceful, yet close enough for a long weekend trip from Boston or Portland. Here, autumn is not a spectacle staged for crowds—it’s a season lived fully by the land itself. For travelers seeking sweeping foliage views, crisp mountain air, and lakeside serenity, the Rangeley Lakes Region offers an autumn escape that rivals the best of New England—without the bustle. In fall, the wilderness doesn’t just surround you; it embraces you.

A Region Steeped in Tradition

The Rangeley Lakes area has long been a retreat for those seeking the outdoors, dating back to 19th-century anglers who came for brook trout and solitude. That heritage lingers in the rustic lodges, cozy cabins, and general stores that still define the region. In autumn, local bakeries and farm stands celebrate the season with pumpkin breads, maple candies, and apple cider. Small town centers like Rangeley and Oquossoc are welcoming without being commercialized. Visitors can stroll through a gallery featuring local artists, grab a hearty meal in a roadside café, or simply sit on a dock and watch the sunset set the lake aglow.

Foliage in Fall

Roxbury, New York's Catskill Colors

Nestled deep in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York, the village of Roxbury offers an authentic slice of autumn that often flies under the radar. While many travelers head to bigger names like the Adirondacks or Hudson Valley, Roxbury quietly unfolds a season of dazzling foliage, peaceful countryside, and the kind of small-town atmosphere that feels tailor-made for fall.

A Landscape of Transformation

As September gives way to October, the hillsides surrounding Roxbury ignite with color. Maples blaze in crimson, oaks turn a deep burgundy, and birches shimmer like strands of gold. Because of the varied elevation in the Catskills, the season lasts longer than in flatter regions, with the peaks glowing first before color trickles into the valleys. By mid-October, the entire landscape seems dipped in firelight, creating a natural panorama that feels both grand and intimate.

Scenic Roads and Country Lanes

The drive into Roxbury is part of the experience itself. Winding country roads reveal scenes of rustic barns, old stone walls, and covered bridges framed by trees ablaze with color. Unlike more crowded routes in the Northeast, these roads invite travelers to slow down, pull over for photos, or simply breathe in the crisp mountain air. Every turn offers a new composition—rolling pastures, ridgelines brushed in gold, or farmhouses glowing against a backdrop of fiery hills.

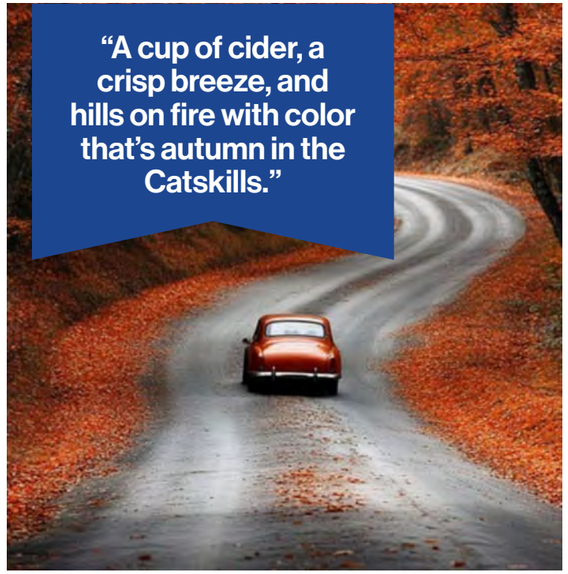
Exploring the Outdoors

Roxbury is surrounded by trails that highlight the season at its best. The Catskill Scenic Trail follows an old railbed through open meadows and wooded stretches, perfect for a leisurely walk or bike ride under a canopy of autumn leaves. For hikers seeking elevation, nearby summits offer sweeping views of valleys awash in color. Even a stroll through the village center rewards visitors with tree-lined streets and the sound of leaves crunching underfoot.

"Every curve of the road in Roxbury feels like a new autumn painting."

Tastes of Autumn in the Catskills

- Hot cider and fresh-pressed apple juice from local orchards
- Maple sugar candies and syrups from roadside stands
- Farm-fresh pumpkin pies and hearty soups
- Artisan cheeses and breads at weekend farmers' markets



Scenic Highlights Around Roxbury

- Catskill Scenic Trail – An easy, flat path along an old railbed surrounded by fields and trees blazing with color.
- Mine Kill Falls Overlook – A short drive brings you to dramatic waterfalls framed by autumn leaves.
- John Burroughs Memorial Site – Celebrate the legacy of the naturalist while enjoying hillside views across the Catskills.
- Rural Backroads – Take Route 30 or local byways for picturesque drives through valleys dotted with barns and stone walls.

"Here, the colors aren't rushed they roll gently from ridge to valley."

A Town With Character

Though small in size, Roxbury brims with character. Its historic buildings, quiet shops, and cozy cafés provide a welcoming pause between outdoor adventures. Local inns and farmhouses host visitors looking for a retreat, while seasonal markets showcase the bounty of the harvest. Autumn here feels less about rushing from one attraction to the next and more about savoring the details—the scent of woodsmoke, the warmth of cider, and the sight of leaves drifting lazily in the breeze.

Quick Tips for Visitors

- Timing: Peak foliage usually runs late September through mid-October.
- Bring layers: Crisp mornings give way to sunny afternoons.
- Camera ready: Light shifts fast in the mountains; golden hour is magic.
- Slow travel: Allow time for unplanned stops sometimes the best views are from a pull-off or front porch.

Harvest Season Highlights

Fall is also a time of gathering in the Catskills. Around Roxbury, farms open their gates for pumpkin picking, hayrides, and roadside stands filled with fresh produce. Apples are pressed into cider, squash is sold in bushels, and maple products remind visitors that sweetness lingers even as winter approaches. These seasonal rituals tie the beauty of the foliage to the rhythms of local life, giving travelers a chance to connect not just with the scenery but with the community itself.

A Fleeting, Lasting Beauty

Like much of the Northeast, the brilliance of Roxbury's foliage is brief. A few windy days can shift the landscape from full blaze to bare branches. Yet, that fleeting nature is what makes the experience so memorable. Each visit feels unique—colors, weather, and light combine differently every year. Long after the leaves have fallen, visitors carry with them the memory of quiet drives, golden hillsides, and the peaceful charm of a town that seems made for autumn.

Foliage in Fall

Discovering Connecticut’s Hidden Litchfield Hills

When autumn arrives in New England, the spotlight often shines on Vermont’s mountain roads or New Hampshire’s scenic byways. Yet tucked into northwestern Connecticut lies a quieter corner where fall feels more personal, more intimate, and just as dazzling. The Litchfield Hills region, often overshadowed by its bigger neighbors, offers a patchwork of rolling farmland, winding country lanes, and forested ridgelines that transform into a painter’s canvas every October.

Towns That Feel Timeless

Part of what makes the Litchfield Hills so inviting is the character of its towns. Places like Kent, Cornwall, and Washington embrace the season with quiet charm. White-steepled churches, clapboard houses, and shaded town greens provide a backdrop that feels frozen in time.

Kent, for example, sits along the Housatonic River and is surrounded by hiking trails that come alive with fall colors. Cornwall is home to one of the oldest covered bridges in the state, its weathered beams framing views of rushing water and flaming treetops beyond. Washington offers a walkable village center filled with small shops, cozy cafés, and galleries showcasing regional artists. None of these towns shout for attention instead, they invite visitors to slow down, breathe deeply, and savor autumn’s rhythm.

Trails, Rivers, and Quiet Escapes

Outdoor enthusiasts find the Litchfield Hills particularly rewarding in fall. The Appalachian Trail cuts through the region, with stretches that offer panoramic ridge views without overwhelming difficulty. Shorter paths, such as those in White Memorial Conservation Center, provide accessible walks through meadows, wetlands, and dense forest alive with color.

Waterways also play a starring role. The Housatonic River, framed by flaming hillsides, is a magnet for kayakers and fly-fishers who don’t mind a crisp bite in the air. Lakes like Waramaug become mirrors for the changing leaves, creating scenes that draw painters and photographers year after year. Even a casual roadside picnic can feel extraordinary when surrounded by such scenery.

Seasonal Flavors and Simple Comforts

Fall here is not just about what you see, but also what you taste. Roadside farm stands brim with fresh cider, heirloom apples, and still-warm pies. Small family-owned restaurants lean into the season with hearty soups and farm-to-table comfort food. Wineries tucked into hillsides pour glasses of locally made vintages, often with a patio view of vineyards glowing in autumn sunlight.

Unlike commercialized tourist centers, the flavors of the Litchfield Hills remain simple and authentic. Visitors may find themselves talking to the orchard owner who grew the fruit or the baker who pulled the pie from the oven that morning. It is this personal connection that makes the season here feel special.

Top Scenic Drives in the Litchfield Hills

- Route 7 near Kent: Follows the Housatonic River with ridge views and roadside farm stands.
- Route 63 through Litchfield: A winding corridor of farmland, stone walls, and historic homes.
- Around Lake Waramaug: A loop where fiery hillsides reflect in still water.

Seasonal Flavors to Try

- Fresh apple cider from roadside orchards
- Pumpkin bread and maple scones at small cafés
- Locally made wine enjoyed on a patio overlooking vineyards
- Warm pies pulled from ovens at family-run bakeries

Best Fall Walks & Hikes

- White Memorial Conservation Center: Easy trails through wetlands and meadows alive with color.
- Mohawk Mountain: A brisk climb for sweeping ridge views at peak season.
- Appalachian Trail Segment: Moderate paths that deliver big scenery without heavy crowds.

Quick Tips for Visitors

- Best Time: Mid-October for peak color, but late season offers golden copper tones into November.
- Pack Layers: Mornings can be crisp while afternoons warm under the sun.
- Take It Slow: Narrow country roads are best enjoyed at a leisurely pace.
- Bring a Camera: Lakes and rivers double the color show with mirrored reflections.

Why Choose the Litchfield Hills?

In a region where fall foliage is big business, the Litchfield Hills stand out not for their scale, but for their intimacy. Here, travelers can wander without crowds, stumble upon quiet trails, and discover towns where time feels slower. The colors rival any in New England, yet the experience feels more grounded, more local, and perhaps even more genuine.

For those seeking a fall escape that combines brilliant scenery with a quieter pace, northwestern Connecticut offers a destination worth discovering. The Litchfield Hills remind us that autumn is not just about seeing the leaves change — it’s about pausing long enough to let the season sink in.

Hidden Pumpkin Patches Worth a Road Trip

There's something magical about wandering through a pumpkin patch on a crisp autumn afternoon. While many people flock to well-known farms, the real charm lies in hidden, family-run pumpkin patches across the U.S. These spots offer more than just pumpkins—they deliver hayrides, apple cider, corn mazes, and that nostalgic fall feeling that makes the season unforgettable.

5 Road-Trip Worthy Hidden Patches

1. Roloff Farms Helvetia, Oregon

Nestled in the countryside outside Portland, this farm is famous for its rustic charm and sprawling pumpkin fields, paired with homemade treats and wagon rides.

2. The Pumpkin Patch on Sauvie Island Portland, Oregon

A quieter, scenic escape just minutes from the city. Visitors love its corn maze and panoramic views of Mt. Hood.

3. Barton Hill Farms Bastrop, Texas

A hidden gem along the Colorado River. Families enjoy giant pumpkin displays, live music, and Texas-style fall festivities.

4. Vala's Pumpkin Patch Gretna, Nebraska

Locals know it as one of the Midwest's best-kept seasonal secrets featuring a giant corn maze, petting zoo, and pumpkin cider donuts.

5. Libby's Pumpkin Patch Libby, Montana

Small but breathtaking, this mountain-surrounded patch feels like a postcard with its crisp air and golden foliage.

Pro Tip

Arrive early for the best selection and bring a camera the backdrops at hidden patches are often the most photogenic.

"Sometimes the best pumpkins are found off the beaten path."

Lists & Quick Guides: 10 Best Apple Orchards in the U.S.

Nothing says fall like a crisp apple plucked straight from the tree. Across the U.S., family-run orchards invite visitors to stroll rows of trees, sip warm cider, and take home baskets of seasonal fruit. Here are ten of the best orchards worth a road trip this autumn:

1. Applecrest Farm Orchards – Hampton Falls, New Hampshire

The oldest continuously operated apple orchard in America, dating back to 1913.

2. Masker Orchards – Warwick, New York

Known for its pick-your-own apples and sweeping views of the Hudson Valley.

3. Honey Pot Hill Orchards – Stow, Massachusetts

A classic New England orchard featuring hayrides, hedge mazes, and cider donuts.

4. Sky Top Orchard – Flat Rock, North Carolina

Offers mountain views, apple picking, and fresh fried apple cider doughnuts.

5. Carter Mountain Orchard – Charlottesville, Virginia

Famous for panoramic Blue Ridge views and hard cider tastings.

6. Mercier Orchards – Blue Ridge, Georgia

A Southern staple, offering over 50 apple varieties and fresh bakery pies.

7. Eckert's Orchards – Belleville, Illinois

A Midwest favorite where families have picked apples for generations.

8. Door Creek Orchard – Cottage Grove, Wisconsin

Organic-focused, with heirloom apple varieties and rustic charm.

9. Kiyokawa Family Orchards – Parkdale, Oregon

At the foot of Mt. Hood, this orchard pairs stunning scenery with dozens of apple varieties.

10. BelleWood Acres – Lynden, Washington

Washington State's pride, offering apples, pumpkin patches, and a farm distillery.

"A road trip to an orchard is fall's sweetest tradition."

Haunted Highways

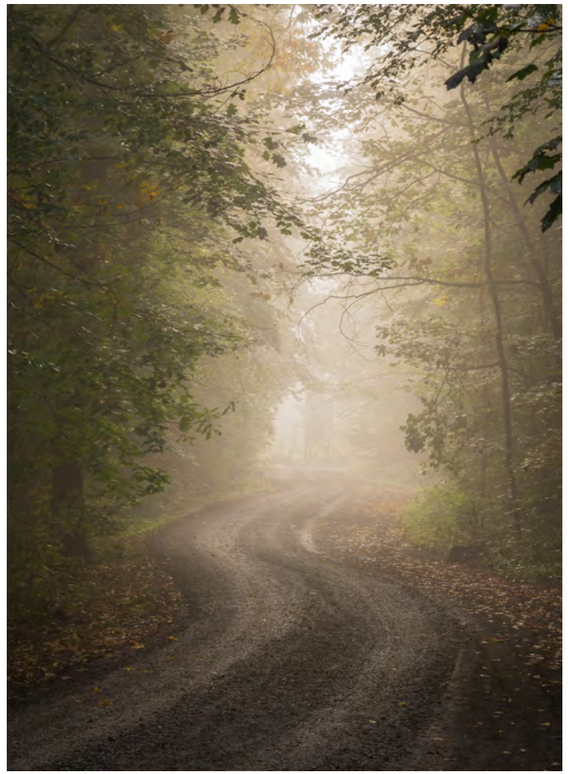
Ghostly Roads, Small-Town Legends, and America's Spooky Side for Fall 2025

When the nights grow long and the wind whispers through bare trees, America's forgotten roads and small towns come alive with ghost stories old enough to rattle your bones. Beneath the neon glow of truck stops and the faded signs of roadside motels, shadows linger where the past refuses to rest.

From misty mountain passes to lonely highways that seem to stretch forever, the USA is rich with places where legends and reality blur. This fall, for travelers craving something a little eerie, America's haunted highways and backroads offer a glimpse into the country's darker, stranger side — if you're brave enough to take the drive.

Route 66: The Mother Road's Darker Miles

Route 66, America's most iconic road trip route, has seen more than its share of ghost stories. Stretching from Chicago to Santa Monica, this historic highway is dotted with ghost towns, abandoned motels, and tales of travelers who never made it to the end. Near Flagstaff, Arizona, drivers whisper about a phantom hitchhiker — a young woman in a white dress who appears on the shoulder on moonless nights. Pull over to offer her a ride, they say, and she vanishes before you can open the door. Some swear they've seen her drifting through the old stone ruins of Two Guns, an abandoned trading post now claimed by coyotes and time.



Clinton Road, New Jersey: The East's Most Haunted Stretch

Deep in the woods of northern New Jersey lies Clinton Road, a narrow, twisting stretch that locals insist is the most haunted road in America. Stories swirl about ghostly children who toss coins back if you throw one into the dark waters below the "Ghost Boy Bridge." Visitors report phantom trucks with glaring headlights that tailgate for miles before disappearing into the night. And if you wander too far into the surrounding forest? Some say you might find strange stone circles or hear chanting that has no earthly source. It's the kind of place you visit once — and talk about for years.

Route 666: The Devil's Highway

No list of haunted highways is complete without the infamous Route 666 — now renamed U.S. Route 491 — that cuts through the high desert of New Mexico and Utah. Long-haul truckers and desert travelers still whisper about "Satan's Highway," where ghostly semi-trucks appear out of nowhere and shadowy figures dart across the asphalt just out of reach. Some claim black dogs stalk travelers at night, bad omens that follow unlucky drivers for miles. Though the name has changed, the legends linger, carried by desert winds and lonely miles.

The Dead-End Roads of Small-Town Appalachia

Beyond the main highways, Appalachia is thick with forgotten towns and chilling folklore. Tucked in the hills of West Virginia, the ghost of the "Mothman" still haunts Point Pleasant, a small riverside town where sightings of a winged creature with glowing red eyes terrified locals in the 1960s. Today, visitors come for the legend — and some swear the creature still lurks in the misty hollows near the old TNT area where it was first seen.

A few states south, Kentucky's backroads tell stories of the "Bluegrass Ghost Bride" — a spectral woman said to appear along winding country lanes near old family cemeteries. She's looking for her lost groom, they say, and if you see her in your headlights on a foggy night, you'll never forget it.

A Road Trip for the Brave

Haunted highways and small-town legends are more than ghost stories — they're echoes of America's restless past. They remind us that even in a country defined by wide-open roads and endless horizons, some places are better left unexplored after dark.

This fall, for travelers drawn to the thrill of the unknown, take the backroads, roll down the windows, and listen for the stories carried on the wind. Who knows what you might see in the rearview mirror — or who might be waiting at the next bend.
So pack a flashlight, fuel up, and follow the road into America's haunted heart. Just be sure to leave a porch light on for when you find your way back — if you do.

Holiday Hot Spots

The season of sparkle and celebration is here, and with it comes a world of destinations that shine a little brighter. From twinkling main streets draped in lights to cozy towns hosting festive parades and holiday markets, “Holiday Hot Spots” highlights the places where traditions come alive. These are the destinations that wrap visitors in warmth, wonder, and a dash of magic—making every getaway feel like stepping into the heart of the holidays.

Grapevine, Texas

Ninety Days of Pure Holiday Magic

By Explore USA Magazine

A Holiday Town That Refuses to Hurry

Some towns celebrate the holidays. Grapevine, Texas, lives them.
From October 6, 2025, through January 6, 2026, this vintage Texas community on the doorstep of Dallas–Fort Worth International Airport becomes a stage set for the entire holiday season. The State of Texas has crowned it the Christmas Capital of Texas®, and with good reason: more than 1,400 events unfold across 40 festive days, layered on top of an October filled with pumpkins, costumes, and haunted fun.

Every street glows, every storefront shines, and every train whistle signals that another chapter of Grapevine's storybook holiday season is about to begin.

"In Grapevine, even Halloween rides the rails."

🎃 Spooky Beginnings: October on the Rails

October is Grapevine's prologue a month when spooky fun takes over before Santa steals the show.
At the heart of the celebration are the Grapevine Vintage Railroad's Halloween rides.

- Trick 'r Treat Trains (October 25–26) turn historic coaches into rolling costume parades, with candy stations, ghost stories, and plenty of laughter.
- The Witches' Brew Train (October 31) is strictly for grown-ups, with Texas craft beers, eerie entertainment, and a haunted depot walk that makes Halloween night unforgettable.

All across town, pumpkins line Main Street, Great Wolf Lodge hosts its month-long Howl-O-Ween, and community trunk-or-treat nights bring neighbors together. Grapevine starts the holidays with a wink, a shiver, and a whole lot of fun.

🚂 The Magic of the Rails

As October fades, the trains don't stop they simply transform. In Grapevine, the rails are more than transportation. They're the heartbeat of the holidays.

🎅 Santa's North Pole Express®

Climb aboard the North Pole Express and step straight into a Christmas fairytale.
Vintage coaches, strung with garland and twinkling lights, carry families through a journey of music, storytelling, and wide-eyed wonder. Cheerful elves hand out souvenir mugs filled with Frosty Chocolate Snow Milk, while carolers move through the aisles. Children clutch their golden tickets tightly, eyes sparkling as the train slows for the big moment: the glowing North Pole, where Santa and Mrs. Claus make their grand entrance.

The ride is short about 45 minutes but the memories last forever. Tickets (on sale October 1) sell out within days.

🍷 The Christmas Wine Train

While children dream of Santa, adults dream of clinking glasses on the Christmas Wine Train. On select nights beginning November 21, the vintage coaches become a moving tasting room. Passengers sip Texas wines, sample holiday treats, and soak up live entertainment under the soft glow of holiday lights. It's festive, romantic, and distinctly Texan the perfect toast to the season.

"It's not just a train ride. It's a journey into Christmas magic."

More Holiday Journeys

Even after Christmas Day, the trains keep rolling through December 30, offering families and friends one last chance to savor the magic before the New Year.

Sidebar: Tips for Riding the Trains

- Buy early: Tickets for the North Pole Express release October 1 at 10 a.m.
- Dress the part: Pajamas and Christmas sweaters make the best photos.
- Arrive early: The depot itself is decorated and perfect for snapshots.
- Save your mug: Souvenir cups from the North Pole Express have become collectibles.

A City in Full Costume

Everywhere you look, Grapevine dresses the part.

- Grapevine Christmas Market & Village line the streets with artisans and food trucks.
- Toyland & Hometown Christmas create whimsical photo backdrops.
- ICE! at Gaylord Texan Resort turns two million pounds of ice into larger-than-life sculptures.
- Snowland at Great Wolf Lodge brings indoor snow showers and family activities.
- Every plaza, every corner, every lamp post becomes a photo op.

Main Street: A Hallmark Scene

When you step onto Grapevine's Historic Main Street, you step into a Hallmark movie.

Boutiques overflow with holiday treasures, galleries glow with local art, and restaurants buzz with seasonal flavors. Some highlights:

- Blow your own glass ornament at Vetro Glassblowing Studio.
- Warm up with gourmet cocoa at Dr. Sue's Hot Chocolate Bar.
- Share a slice of homemade pie at JudyPie.
- Try the legendary fried avocado at Esparza's, the Margarita Capital of Texas.
- Pair cookies and Texas wines at Winestein's Tasting Room.

Anchoring it all is the Peace Plaza Ice Rink, circling beneath a 60-foot live Christmas tree — a sight so grand, locals call it the Rockefeller Center of the Southwest.

When the Sky Joins the Show

- Carol of Lights (November 24) launches the season with fireworks and Santa's arrival.
- Parade of Lights (December 4) is the largest illuminated parade in North Texas.
- Merry & Bright Drone Shows (December 1 and 8) send 400 synchronized drones dancing across the Grapevine sky.

"In Grapevine, even the sky gets into the holiday spirit."

Music, Movies & Victorian Memories

Inside the Historic Palace Theatre, holiday films flicker on the big screen White Christmas, It's a Wonderful Life, and more while live concerts and stage shows keep spirits soaring.

At Nash Farm, families step back into the 1800s to experience a Victorian Christmas, complete with costumed guides, simple decorations, and timeless holiday traditions.

Holiday Timeline

- Oct 6–24: Fall décor and pumpkin season.
- Oct 25–26: Trick 'r Treat Trains.
- Oct 31: Witches' Brew Train.
- Nov 21: Christmas Wine Train begins.
- Nov 24: Carol of Lights, official kickoff.
- Nov 24 – Jan 5: More than 1,400 holiday events.
- Dec 1 & 8: Merry & Bright Drone Shows.
- Dec 4: Parade of Lights.
- Through Dec 30: Santa's North Pole Express.
- Jan 6: The season ends.

Why Grapevine Belongs on Your List

- Official Title: Christmas Capital of Texas®.
- Scale: Over 1,400 holiday events.
- Charm: Vintage town that glows like a storybook.
- Convenience: Minutes from DFW Airport with free shuttles.
- Atmosphere: From pumpkins to peppermint, it's nonstop magic.

Final Thoughts

In Grapevine, the holidays aren't rushed. They're celebrated, savored, and shared — from the spooky fun of October to the sparkling magic of Christmas and New Year's. Whether you're sipping cocoa with Santa on the North Pole Express® or raising a glass of wine with friends aboard the Christmas Wine Train, the journey always ends the same way: with memories worth keeping forever.

🎄 Holiday Hot Spots Across America

“Leavenworth doesn’t just decorate for the season it becomes the season.”

The holiday season is about more than decorations it’s about places that sparkle with tradition, warmth, and winter magic. From small towns draped in lights to coastal escapes that trade snow for sunshine, the U.S. is filled with destinations that glow brighter during the holidays. Here are a few that belong on every traveler’s list.

✨ Leavenworth, Washington – A Bavarian Snow Globe

Tucked into the Cascade Mountains, Leavenworth feels like a German village reborn in the American Northwest. When December arrives, the streets glitter under a half-million lights, and the Christmas Lighting Festival draws families for carols, cocoa, and horse-drawn sleigh rides. Visitors wander between bakeries serving spiced stollen bread and markets filled with handmade ornaments.

🎁 Frankenmuth, Michigan – Christmas All Year

Nicknamed “Michigan’s Little Bavaria,” Frankenmuth takes holiday cheer seriously. Home to Bronner’s, the world’s largest Christmas store, it offers more ornaments and lights than you could imagine. Winter visitors stroll through streets lined with German-style chalets, enjoy hearty Bavarian meals, and soak in the glow of small-town holiday spirit.

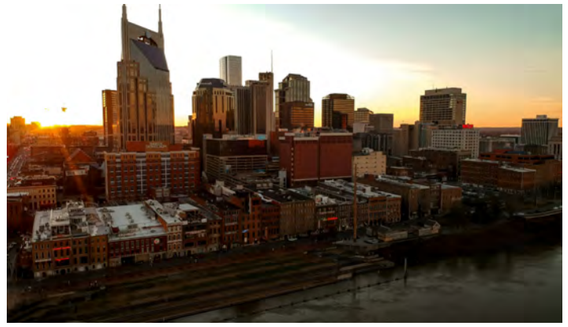
Tip: Don’t miss a horse-drawn carriage ride down Main Street when it’s blanketed in snow.

🎅 Santa Fe, New Mexico – Southwestern Glow

For a holiday experience with cultural flair, Santa Fe lights up with luminarias — paper lanterns glowing along adobe walls and historic streets. Canyon Road’s Christmas Eve walk is a highlight, as thousands gather by candlelight, music fills the night, and hot chile stew keeps the cold at bay. Here, the holidays blend tradition, art, and warmth in unforgettable fashion.

🌴 St. Augustine, Florida – Nights of Lights

Not all holiday hot spots are snowy. America’s oldest city turns tropical streets into a sea of white lights during its famous Nights of Lights celebration. From November through January, millions of tiny bulbs shimmer on palm trees, historic buildings, and waterfront walkways. Visitors can take in the view by trolley, boat, or simply strolling cobblestone lanes.



🎶 Nashville, Tennessee – A Country Christmas

Music City embraces the holidays with Southern charm. At the Gaylord Opryland Resort, nearly three million lights, themed displays, and ice sculptures wow visitors. Downtown, honky-tonks mix live country tunes with holiday cheer, while nearby Belle Meade Plantation decks its halls in Victorian splendor. Nashville proves that holiday spirit comes with a little rhythm, too.

Why These Places Shine

What ties these destinations together is not size or fame, but atmosphere. Each one creates a holiday scene that feels immersive — whether it’s Bavarian lights in the mountains, lanterns glowing in the desert, or palm-lined streets twinkling by the sea. They are reminders that the holidays aren’t just a date on the calendar; they’re a feeling, and these spots capture it beautifully.

Remax

Social media channels

About Jamie

There are so many qualities and skills that make me the best real estate professional I can be for my clients. They include integrity, knowledge of the current market, effective negotiation skills, passion to assist my clients, and top notch vendors to make every deal successful.

That said, after 19+ years as a Real Estate Professional, I have found the very best service is essentially about putting clients first. I make sure I am accessible, a good communicator, and a good listener. I stay up to date on all of the newest technology as well as I continually update my education so my clients always get the best service.

Living in the Tampa Bay area for over 30 years has given me the knowledge to help any client that is relocating from another area or simply moving across the bay.

About Anthony

I'm dedicated to helping my clients find the home of their dreams. Whether you are buying or selling a home or just curious about the local market, I would love to offer my support and services.

I know the local community both as an agent and a neighbor and can help guide you through the nuances of our local market. With access to top listings, exceptional marketing strategies, and cutting-edge technology, I work hard to make your real estate experience memorable and enjoyable.

Happy Holidays from Explore USA Magazine

As another year of adventure comes to a close, all of us at Explore USA Magazine want to thank you for being part of our journey. From coast to coast, we've shared the stories, sights, and small-town wonders that make America shine — and we can't wait to explore even more with you in the year ahead.

May your holidays be filled with warmth, joy, and the spirit of discovery. Here's to new adventures, cozy getaways, and unforgettable memories in every season.

Winter Issue Sneak Peek

Winter Issue on sale Monday, February 2nd through Monday, April 27th